

# *the* **Sea Swallow**



BEING THE ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE ROYAL NAVAL  
BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

PUBLISHED 1989

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*Membership* has been widened from the R.N. to include all those who  
share a common background — the sea itself — regardless of  
nationality.\*

*Aims and activities.* The primary aim of the Society is to promote a  
forum for the exchange of information on seabirds, and of land-  
birds at sea, by members for whom birdwatching is a spare-time  
recreation and hobby. The secondary aim is to co-ordinate the  
efforts of individual members using standardised recording methods  
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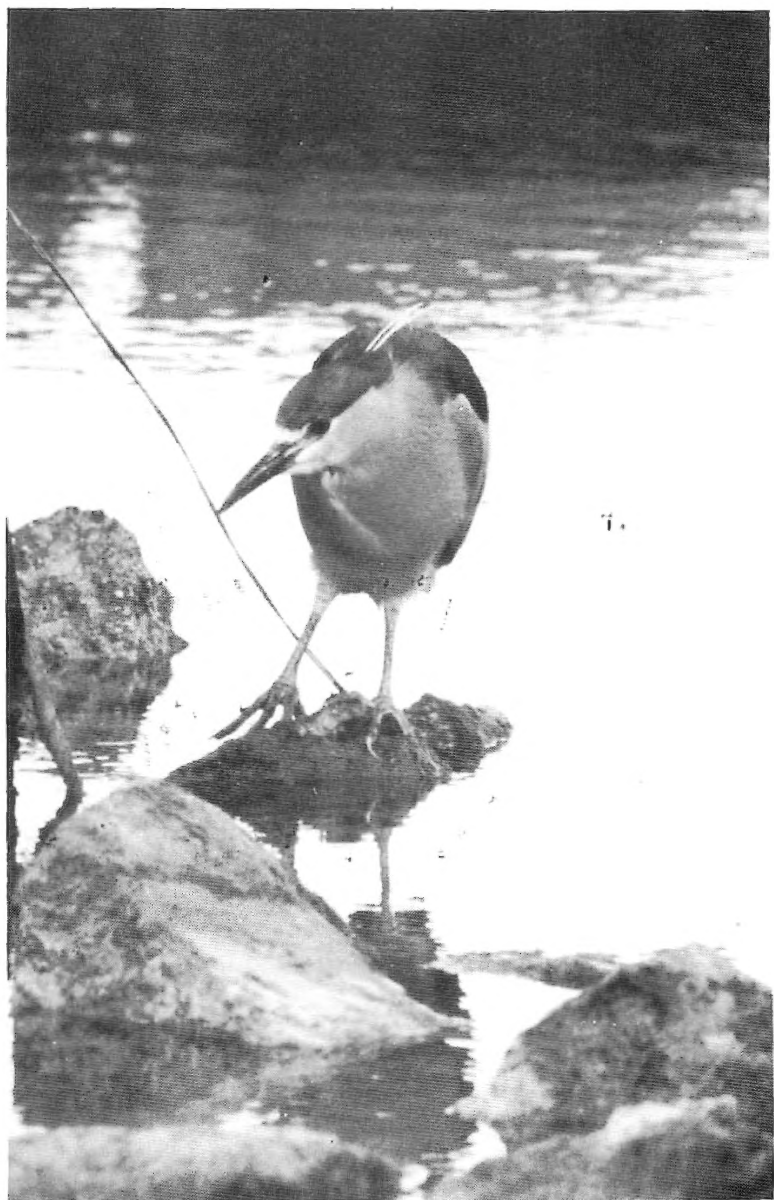
Completed record forms should be sent to Stephen Chapman (sea-  
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Material for publication in *Sea Swallow* should be sent to the Editor  
(see instructions to authors inside back cover).

\*An application form for membership is on page 71.

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Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* stalking prey, Falklands  
Photo: Second Officer Christine Poulter, WRNS  
Winner of Sea Swallow Photographic Competition 1988



## FOREWORD

This summer has seen Michael Casement relieved at the helm of Chairmanship, and we extend to Mike Barritt our warm welcome as he takes over.

But *Sea Swallow*, its tone, its policies, its reach, impact and authority happily continue, as for so long, to be a celebration of Michael Casement's unflagging devotion to our Society's aims, to his wide knowledge and abilities, and to the standards he has set. It is our good fortune that he remains Editor.

We may in passing reflect that to separate Chairmanship from Editorship is to remind us that, unique and important as *Sea Swallow* is, the Society is the membership; and that reduced opportunities for watching birds at sea, whether because of fewer, busier deployments, or long watches in the Ops. Room, or just advancing age, leave us with plentiful options for other useful, as well as enjoyable, ornithological endeavour ashore. Do RNBWS members contribute as much as we might to the work of the MOD Conservation Groups, the Wildfowl Counts, the Common Bird Census?

The challenges abound. May we hear more from you soon, both afloat and ashore, at an AGM.



## EDITORIAL

It is good to see several new names contributing to this volume, and the number and quality of both seabird and landbird reports continue to improve. These have kept your editors extremely busy, and I am specially grateful to Bill Bourne for achieving the analysis of two years worth of seabird reports. I am also pleased to include the articles from HM Yacht *Britannia* and RFA *Oakleaf*, and two from HMS *Ark Royal*. Well done, and please keep the reports, and photographs coming. The battle for space is always a problem, so short articles will stand a better chance than long ones.

But there is no room for complacency. The inclusion of three short obituaries this year, and the recent death of Vice President RNBWS, Sir Peter Scott, is a reminder of what a huge debt we owe to the founder members, and that too high a percentage of our membership are long ago retired from active service. The society urgently needs more and younger members, without which we shall soon have to consider raising our membership subscription to take account of ever rising costs. If each of us were to recruit one new member, we might be able to delay this another year. Please make a special effort.

Finally, please note the address, inside the front cover, of my successor as Chairman, Mike Barritt, and the new address of the Hon. Secretary.

MICHAEL CASEMENT

## VISIT TO BOOBY ISLAND — TORRES STRAIT, N. AUSTRALIA

By Captain M.G.T. Harris, Royal Navy.

Between June and December 1988 H.M.S *Ark Royal*, in company with H.M.S. *Edinburgh* and H.M.S. *Sirius*, and the R.F.As *Fort Grange*, *Olwen* and *Orangeleaf*, deployed to the Far East and Australia, going out and returning via Suez.

Elsewhere in this issue, Lieutenant Doug Robertson has recorded a fascinating day's birdwatching near Brisbane. Others of H.M.S. *Ark Royal*'s small band of enthusiasts, including RNBWS member Chief Petty Officer Bob Shilling, had some worthwhile and absorbing outings in our various ports of call, mainly in Australia, but also in Hong Kong and Singapore. As far as seabirds were concerned, with the notable exception of Australian waters, and especially in the south, the whole voyage was rather disappointing, with little seen despite the thousands of miles travelled. This is probably mainly due to the fact that "ARK" is an aircraft carrier making a lot of noise, and filling the air with her own "birds" for much of the time. She is very high out of the water, and from the bridge, 90 feet up, one misses much; even from the quarterdeck which is covered, one is aware that most of the seabird activity occurs below, close to the sea surface. As a final insult, one of the very few birds seen in the South China Sea, a Red-footed Booby, altered course and flew, apparently quite deliberately, into the path of a launching *Sea Harrier*, striking one of its fuel tanks, and fell dead into the sea.

Some weeks earlier, however, when discussing with the navigator the plan for our transit through the Torres Straits at the north-eastern tip of Australia, I had noticed on the chart a small island with the intriguing name of Booby Island. With such a name, and since we were going to have to loiter in the vicinity to pick up the pilot, I decided to arrange a small expedition to explore it. The only information available, gleaned from the chart, was that it measured 400yd by 200yd, and boasted a lighthouse. It was not clear whether the lighthouse was manned or not.

Dawn of 17 September thus saw some half dozen of us in the seaboat making the two mile transit to the shore of what could now be seen as a rocky islet. We felt encouraged by seeing small groups of Brown Boobies on patrol and, with about half a mile to go from the rather forbidding low cliffs, were relieved to see two figures, who turned out to be the lighthouse keeper, Arnold Williams and his wife, Leila. They beckoned towards the only easy landing place. There followed a fascinating hour and a half scrambling around the island, guided by the Williamses. There are two caves, one with aboriginal paintings, and one used a sailing ship post office in the last century. Local mail was dropped there by outbound vessels to be picked up by vessels inbound.

As for the birds, Bridled Terns flew around us as we landed, with their white plumage appearing pale green with reflections from the sea water; their eggs were to be found all over the south-eastern corner of the island. The total of 15 species sighted on and around the island is listed at the end of this article.

The saddest sight was hundreds of Rainbow Bee-eaters, beautiful pale green-and-blue birds, perched in rows on the branches of small trees, waiting to die. Apparently they migrate south across the Torres Straits in September, and some thousands of the weaker ones stop to rest on Booby Island, but as there is no sustenance for them there, they die. We were seeing the last survivors who, as one of their number falls dead off the perch, move up to close the gap, until finally none are left.

On a different, and mildly disappointing note, there are no Brown Boobies now nesting on Booby Island. Presumably they don't like company, and are to be found nesting on White Rock, some miles away.

Finally, it is of interest to realise that Booby Island has its place in history. On 22nd August 1770 Captain Cook, having sailed up the Great Barrier Reef, had reached Cape York, and on an offlying island (Possession Island) had laid claim, on behalf of King George III, to all of what he termed New South Wales, which would now be all of Eastern Australia. Next day, the 23rd, he pushed on westward, and to quote from his journal - *Journals of Captain Cook: Voyage of the ENDEAVOUR*, page 390:

'Being now near the Island and having but little wind Mr Banks and I landed upon it and found it to be mostly a barren Rock frequented by birds such as Boobies, a few of which we Shott and occasioned my giving it the name of Booby Island. I made but a very short stay at this Island before I returned to the Ship. In the mean time the wind had got to SW and altho it blowed but very faint it was accompanied with a swell from the same quarter; this together with other concurring circumstances left me no room to doubt but we were got to the Westward of Carpentaria or the Northern extremity of New-Holland and had now an open Sea to the Westward, which gave me no small satisfaction not only because the dangers and fatigues of the Voyage was drawing near to an end, but by being able to prove that New-Holland and New-Guinea are two separate Lands or Islands, which untill this day hath been a doubtful point with Geographers'.

The following list of species seen on or near Booby Island on 17 September 1988 was compiled by Chief Petty Officer Bob Shilling, H.M.S. *Ark Royal*:

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* - seen offshore  
Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* - seen offshore  
Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*  
Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta*  
Glossy (or Shining) Starling *Aplonis metallica*  
Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*  
Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*  
Brown (or Common) Noddy *Anous stolidus*  
Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*  
Marsh (or Swamp) Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*  
Nankeen Night Heron *Nycticorax caledonicus*  
Unidentified egret *Egretta* sp.  
Red-crowned Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus regina*  
Torres Strait Pigeon *Ducula spilorrhoa*  
Unidentified flycatcher.

## A DAY OUT DOWN UNDER

By Lieutenant D.M. Robertson B.Sc. Royal Navy, H.M.S. *Ark Royal*

It is always a pleasure to visit a new bird reserve and explore some unfamiliar countryside or coastline. Armed with binoculars, cameras and the indispensable Field Guide one sets off in the hope of spotting some elusive species which has been avoiding one for years. Two or three first-time sightings, and that healthy feeling produced by copious amounts of fresh air and exercise is normally the measure of an enjoyable and successful day. Visiting a new continent is a whole new experience as nearly every species sighted is for the first time. H.M.S. *Ark Royal* arrived in Australia in the middle of September 1988 on deployment to take part in the Bicentennial Naval Review in Sydney. Our first port of call was Brisbane, Queensland, which proved to be the gateway to an enormous bird reserve. It was with excitement that I set off, armed with the necessary equipment, at four o'clock one morning with a small group of enthusiasts (three from *Ark Royal* and three locals), led by an expatriate from Sheffield, whose knowledge of Australian birds made the Field Guide redundant.

We headed west towards Toowoomba and the Great Dividing Range on a tour which would include as many habitats as possible in one day. Dawn found us at the edge of a small pond NW of Ipswich, notepads at the ready. I managed to identify the Australian Coot, only to be informed that it was the same species *Fulva atra* found in Europe, as also were Australian Grebe *Podiceps ruficollis* and Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, but White-faced Heron *Ardea novaehollandiae*, Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa*, Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio* and a pair of Little Black Cormorants *Phalacrocorax subcirostris* were the first of many species new to me that day. With another 200km ahead of us we were soon on the move towards Esk, initially crossing open farmland where the Galah or Rose-breasted Cockatoo *Cacatua roseicapilla* was one of the more common species sighted. This most attractive bird is, however, regarded as a pest by the local farmers on whose crops of fruit and grain they feed. One of the less common species was a lone White-backed Swallow *Cheramoeca leucosternum* which flew out of its roadside burrow and proceeded to put on an aerobatic display which clearly demonstrated its ability to feed on the wing. Stopping briefly to view some Plumed Whistling Ducks *Dendrocygna eytoni* at a small waterhole we were further rewarded with a view of a Spotted Harrier *Circus assimilis* on the wing. This impressive smokey-blue-grey hawk displayed its hunting ability, sweeping low across the grassland and through the open woodland in search of ground prey.

Next stop was by the shores of Atkinson's Dam, but unfortunately there were few birds in evidence due to unusually high waters. Some Noisy Miners *Manorina melanocephala*, however, did entertain us during a short interlude for refreshments. We drove on to nearby Seven Mile Lagoon where the surrounding area provided habitat for species common to wetland, grassland and swamp. Three species of ibis - Glossy *Plegadis falcinellus*, Sacred (White) *Theskiurus molucca* and Straw-

necked *T. spinicollis* - were prominent, and also Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*, Black-fronted Plover *Charadrius melanops*, Silver Gull *Larus novaehollandiae*, Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* and a number of Black Swans *Cygnus atratus*. High above the marshland, a Whistling Kite *Haliaster sphenurus* soared effortlessly, seeking an easy meal. This raptor often feeds on carrion, but will also take live prey and occasionally will harry feeding birds such as ibis, forcing them to disgorge.

Bush and woodland habitats were next on our itinerary. A trip to Australia would not be complete without sighting the Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo gigas*. This common bush bird is one of the world's largest kingfishers and its daily diet often includes snakes which are plentiful in the bush. The Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta* was also a familiar sight, and like its counterpart in Britain is associated with riverbanks. Scaley-breasted Lorikeets *Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus* proved harder to spot as they searched through the tree-tops for nectar and pollen which form part of their staple diet, but our patience was finally rewarded.

We are all familiar with the Wren *Froglodytes troglodytes*, a tiny rotund brown bird which inhabits the British hedgerows, but it pales to insignificance beside its Australian namesakes. The Splendid Wren *Malurus splendens* and the Superb Blue Wren *M. cyaneus* were easily spotted in the undergrowth, the males sporting a distinctive blue and turquoise colour scheme. As we threaded our way along the narrow woodland paths, various pardalotes *Pardalotus sp.*, honeyeaters *Certhionyx sp.*, thornbills *Acanthiza sp.* and robins *Petroica sp.* added to this colourful display. The Eastern Whipbird *Psophodes olivaceus*, with its loud and distinctive whiplash call, refused to show its face, remaining out of sight in the denser thickets. This shy bird, however, put in an appearance in the rain-forests, the final habitat of our excursion. It was here that we spotted one of the day's highlights, a male Paradise Riflebird *Ptiloris paradiseus* in the forest canopy. This spectacular bird has a long curved bill, feeding on insects and larvae as well as fruit, and its behaviour is very similar to that of a treecreeper. Its plumage is velvet-black with a bright green crown, throat and upper breast. The feathers of the underparts are brightly margined in rich olive-green.

As the day came to a close we set off for Brisbane and, before the sun had slipped below the horizon, were fortunate to see a pair of Glossy Black Cockatoos *Calyptorhynchus lathami*. Sadly these are in decline due to woodland clearing and it was fascinating to watch this pair feeding on seed capsules held in their feet, and breaking them open with their massive bills.

As an introduction to Australian birds this was a magnificent day out, living up to all our expectations, and a total of 82 species were sighted for the first time by the *Ark Royal* contingent - all in all a day to remember.

Lieutenant D.M. Robertson B.Sc., Royal Navy, 31 Bucklers Mead Road, Yeovil, Somerset, BA21 5RB.

## SEABIRD REPORTS RECEIVED IN 1987 AND 1988

By Dr W.R.P.Bourne

As a result of seven years of hard work by Stephen Chapman, the seabird reporting organisation, which had become sadly behind, has been brought up to date, and is flourishing again. Last year we thought that it was time for him to have a rest and for me to have another go, but I was then suddenly posted to the Armilla Patrol in the Gulf. I apologise for the consequent occurrence of another of those familiar delays, but we should now be up to date again.

These notes cover 23 contributions from 1987, and another 18 for 1988. There are the usual wide variety of reports, ranging from 100 pages of notes from the S. Atlantic from Bill Curtis, which he has already summarised in *Sea Swallow* (37: 3-8), and nearly as many notes and forms from all over the world from Third Officers Andy Louch and Peter Neve, to short summaries covering long series of observations of outstanding importance from Captain David Simpson in the East Indies. Regrettably Captains Chilman and Salwegter have now retired, but are already being replaced by new observers.

A growing number of observers are now making more systematic records on the census forms (which can incidentally also be converted into useful tables by ruling vertical lines in the observation section). It would be very helpful if some people could also be more precise about locations and the total number of birds seen in a clearly defined period, so that we can obtain a clearer measure of their density; it is not very helpful to be given a bearing from a landmark in an area for which one has no chart, or vague reports that birds were 'scarce' or 'common', when it is not clear whether this means that only one was seen in a day or only a hundred in an hour.

Regrettably the recent proliferation of field guides and revised national check-lists full of local idiosyncrasies has also led to growing confusion over seabird classification and nomenclature. We have normally kept close to the usage adopted by W.B.Alexander after consultation with R.C.Murphy in the successive editions of the first of all bird field guides, *The Birds of the Ocean* (1928, 1966), since between them they had unrivalled experience of most of the seabirds of the world; they were subsequently followed fairly closely by Captain Tuck in his *Field Guide to the Seabirds* (1978). While many may find helpful the more detailed descriptions in Peter Harrison's *Seabirds - an Identification Guide* (1983) and the illustrations in his concise *Seabirds of the World - a Photographic Guide* (1987), it seems regrettable that the latter in particular departs so widely from the established vernacular names and order of species.

### OBSERVERS SENDING IN NOTES IN 1987-88

(R - RNBWS Report Sheets, C - RNBWS Census Sheets, B - RNBWS Bird-in-hand Report Forms, N - other notes, P - photographs).

Lt Cdr F.J. Aitken RN- HMS *Beaver*. NE Atlantic Ocean, Apr-May 87 (3N).

- Mr R.C.L. Aran and other meteorological staff- OWS *Cumulus*. Voyages between Greenock and Weather Station Lima. Oct 86-Mar 88 (6C,10R,4N).
- Captain P.W.G. Chilman- MV *Donovania*. U.K. waters, Sep-Nov 83 (1C).
- Senior Radio Officer W.F. Curtis- RFA *Sir Lancelot*. Falklands, six round trips to South Georgia, and north to Gibraltar, Dec 86-May 87 (100N).
- Second Officer R.G. Daley- MV *St. Aubin*. Japan-Alaska-W. Australia-Fiji-Panama. Mar-Aug 86 (C).
- First Officer J.G.W. Dixon- MV *Encounter Bay*. Gulf of Aden-Fremantle-Melbourne and return to Suez, Feb-Apr 87 (2C,6N)
- Captain P.C. Dyer- MV *Shetland Service*. Central North Sea. Jan-Jul 87; Fulmar A Platform, 56.5°N 02.1°E, Nov 87-Mar 88 (11C, graph).
- Mr M.J. Everett- MTS *Orpheus*. Piraeus-Patmos-Fethiye-Suez Canal-Aqaba-Safaga-Suez Canal-Limassol-Piraeus, Mar 88 (17N).
- Radio Officer M.G. Finn- MV *Rubens* and *Nosira Sharon*. Six Atlantic Crossings Oct 86-Jan 87, Nov-Dec 87. Gibraltar-Suez-Chittagong-Mauritius Jan-Feb 88; Cape Town- Montreal Apr 88 (10C); MV *Stainless Spray*. Cape Town-Ushant-Safi, Morocco-Bonny River, Nigeria; Huelva-Cabot Strait; Freeport, Texas-Cartagena, Colombia, Aug- Nov 88. (6C).
- Third Officer B. Grandin- MV *Falstaff* SLCO. N. Atlantic and N. Pacific, May-Aug 86. Europe-N. Pacific-Indian Ocean-Europe Dec 86-Feb 87; Southampton-Mediterranean ports-Gulf-Singapore-Hong Kong-Taiwan-Yokohama-Suez-Dublin. Jul-Sep 87 (19C,4R, 5 maps); UK-Canada-Texas-Panama-Portland-Yokohama-Suez-Finland, Feb-May 88 (11C).
- Captain J.W. Gurton- MV *Petersfield*. Japan-British Columbia-Panama, Aug-Sep 87; Townsville-Yokohama, Busan-Seattle Jan-Mar 88. (3 C). MV *Chelsfield*; Rotterdam- Paranagua-Sheerness, Antwerp-Trinidad-Los Angeles, Jul-Oct 88 (3C).
- Chief Officer P.W. Jackson- MV *Liverpool Star*. Liverpool-Israel and return, Dublin-Limassol-Israel and return, Mar-May 87 (6R).
- Lt G.D. Lewis RN- HMS *Hecla*. Norwegian Sea, N Atlantic, Apr 88 (3N).
- Chief Officer M.C. Littlewood- MT *London Spirit*. New York-Luanda-Cape Verde Is.- New York-Venezuela-Virginia-Trinidad-Savannah-Falmouth-Philadelphia-Cameroon- Virginia, Mar-Aug 87; Gulf of Mexico-New York and return-West Africa-Algeria- Caribbean, Feb-Jun 88 (4C,19R, summaries, computer printout for species).
- Third Officer (recently promoted to Chief Officer) A.R. Louch- RRS *Discovery*. Cruise south from Mauritius and back, Cape Town, Dec 86-Feb 87 (10C,3R); Clyde-Faeroes and return, Great Yarmouth, Plymouth Jun-Jul 87 (9C); Muscat, Mauritius, Durban Sep-Nov 87 (6C). RRS *Charles Darwin*. Singapore-S.China Sea-Darwin, Feb 88; Suva-Auckland, May 88 (10C); Lisbon-Tenerife-mid Atlantic ridge-Tenerife-Madeira- Tenerife-Madeira, Jul-Sep 88 (5C); RRS *Challenger*, North Sea, Oct-Dec 88 (2C).

- Captain S. D. Mayl- RRS *Charles Darwin*. Durban-Fremantle, Nov-Dec 87, Tahiti-Valparaiso, Oct-Nov 88 (4C).
- Mr P. Meeth- MV *Nedlloyd Houtman*. Notes from various parts of the world.
- Third Officer P. Neve- MV *ACT 7*. Europe-S. Atlantic-New Zealand and return via Panama and eastern US, Dec 86-Feb 87 (20R). MV *Wellington Star*; four voyages between eastern North America and New Zealand, Mar-Jul 87 (34N); MV *ACT 7*. Europe-Australasia and return via Cape Horn, Nov 87-Jan 88 (19N).
- NA(Met) C.M. Patrick- HMS *Herald*. Persian/ Arabian Gulf, Aug 88. (1B).
- Captain K. Salwegter- MV *Amstelvoorn*. Antwerp-Brasil-Singapore-Durban, Sep-Dec 86 (14R); New Zealand-Philippines-Taiwan-Fiji-New Zealand-Philippines, May-Aug 87 (10C,13P).
- Captain D.M. Simpson- M.V. *Bigorange XV*. Hormuz to Malacca Straits, Feb 87 (2C); MV *Wira Keris*. W Borneo, Mar-Apr and Jun-Sep 87 (5N).
- Col. P.J.S. Smith RM- Ferry from Ceuta to Algeciras, Strait of Gibraltar, Apr 87 (1C). Local yacht, Mauritius, Oct 88 (1C).
- Mr M. Stannard- RFA *Oakleaf*. UK-Bermuda-Caribbean, Aug-Oct 88 (10R).
- Chief Officer R.J. Tucker- MV *Canterbury Star*. Chile-Balboa, Mar 87 (1C). MV *Act 5*. Balboa-Auckland, Sep 88 (1C,1B).
- Mr Bernard Watts- SS *Canberra*. Madeira-Florida-Panama-Magellan Strait-Rio-Durban, Jan-Feb 86 (10C); SS *Queen Elizabeth 2*. Mombasa-Bombay-Hawaii-Japan-Los Angeles- Panama-New York, Mar-Apr 86 (5C).
- Chief Officer M.G. Weir- MV *Canmar Venture*. Cadiz-Montreal-Livorno, Nov-Dec 86, May 87, Jun-Jul 87; MV *Canmar Ambassador*. Europe-Montreal and return. Apr-May 88 (4R,10C).
- Radio Officer W. Weitkowitz- MV *Kalynnios*. Antwerp-Alexandria-Latakia-Beirut- Iskanderun-Syros-Izmir-Salerno-La Spezia-Antwerp, Nov 86-Jan 87 (14R); MV *Conti Helvetia*. Antwerp-Port Said-Port Moresby-Chile-Japan, Jun-Aug 87 (14R).
- Captain J.W. Welch- MV *Strathconon*. Three Atlantic crossings Charleston-Felixstowe-Le Havre-Charleston, Apr-May 87; five crossings Sep-Dec 87; two, Feb-Mar 88 (8C,10R).
- Captain R.L. Westwater- MV *Barrydale*. Gothenburg-Panama-Los Angeles-Tokyo-New Zealand-Panama, Feb-Apr 87 (10R).
- Lieuts R.J.M. Williamson & R.P.N. Woodard RN- HMY *Britannia*. N. Atlantic and Pacific, Jan-Mar 88 (2B).

## NOTES ON SPECIES

### PENGUINS SPHENISCIDAE

Adelie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae*. ARL saw one at 46.5°S 32.7°E on 2 Jan 87.



## ALBATROSSES *DIOMEDEIDAE*

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*. Numerous records between 18.7°S 5.0°E on 12 Aug 88 (MGF) and 47°S (maximum 22 at 35.5°S 1.06°E on 27 Oct 86, KS) in the S. Atlantic, 32°-52°S (maximum 8) in the Indian Ocean, 25°-47°S (maximum 10) in the Tasman Sea, and 45°-53°S (maximum 10) in the South Pacific.

Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora*. Several reported around New Zealand and the Falklands. One at 55.8°S 72.1°W off Tierra del Fuego on 6 Jan 88 (PN), 2-4 at 48.6°S 144.0°W in the central S. Pacific on 31 Dec 87 (PN), and one of the northern race *sanfordi* at 38.4°S 139.5°E in the Great Australian Bight on 3 Mar 87 (JGWD).

Short-tailed Albatross *Diomedea albatrus*. A possible immature, all dark brown with a pale bill but no white at the base, in the central N. Pacific at 31.5°N 172.1°E on 29 Mar 86 (BW).

Black-footed Albatross *Diomedea nigripes*. Up to five reported across the whole width of the Pacific between 24°-51°N. Several mottled birds noticed by PN at 32.7°N 147.7°W on 5 May 87 were presumably moulting.

Laysan Albatross *Diomedea immutabilis*. Up to four reported across the whole width of the Pacific between 23°-51°N, and 21 with the young Short-tailed Albatross at 28.7°N 176.6°W on 29 Mar 86 (BW).

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*. Up to six reported between 22°-56°S across the whole width of the S. Atlantic; up to five reported between 31°-46°S in the Indian Ocean, with 47 at 31.4°S 115.0°E on 17 May 86 (RGD), occasional birds between 22°-40°S in the Tasman Sea, and a possible 50nm NE of Muckle Flugga, Shetland on 14 Apr 88 (GDL).

Shy Albatross *Diomedea cauta*. There are the usual records from around Australasia and South Africa. Up to five White-capped Albatrosses *D. c. cauta* were reported at sea at 46.7°S 159.4°W on 9 Jan 87 (PN), and five times around 40°S 35°-50°E in Dec 86-Jan 87 (ARL). Birds seen off the Falklands by WFC and in the Arabian Sea off Somalia by PM were reported in *Sea Swallow* 37: 5 and 66. SM reported a Salvin's Albatross *D. c. salvini* at 28.5°S 100°W in the central S. Pacific on 11 Nov 88.

Buller's Albatross. *Diomedea bulleri*. There are the usual records from around New Zealand, east to 2-4 at 48.6°S 144.0°W on 31 Dec 87 (PN). WFC has already reported the occurrence of the first birds off the Falklands on 28 Mar 87 in *Sea Swallow* 37: 62.

Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea cauta*. Three were seen by JWG SW of Rio de Janeiro on 16 Jul 88; up to four seen on many occasions between 26°-40°S in the S. Atlantic and between 35°-50°S in the Indian Ocean, with 43 at 35.3°S 116.7°E on 29 May 86, and the most easterly bird at 29.3°S 153.7°E on 10 Jul 86 (RGD).

Grey-headed Albatross. *Diomedea chrysostoma*. A number of records from between 44°-52°S 32°-54°E in the Indian Ocean (ARL), two off Victoria, and one at 52.3°S 109.9°W in the south Pacific on 5 Feb 87 (PN).



Pintado Petrel (or Cape Pigeon) *Daption capense*, South Atlantic  
 Photo: Lieut. Commander M. St. J. D. A. Thorburn, RN

Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca*. A number of records of up to four between 32°-49°S 37°-123°E in the Indian Ocean, with one off Melbourne on 21 Dec 86 (ARL, PN).

Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata*. Seen between 43°-56°S 38°-78°E in the Indian Ocean (ARL, PN), with birds at 46.7°S 178.0°E and 49.1°S 66.9°E in the South Pacific (PN).

## FULMARS, PRIONS, PETRELS, SHEARWATERS

### PROCELLARIIDAE

Giant petrels *Macronectes* sp. Many records of up to 100 of both species around the southern land masses, between 30°-56°S in the S. Atlantic, 37°-52°S in the Indian Ocean, and 38°-56°S in the South Pacific.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*. Totals ran into thousands in several places in the N. Atlantic, and at 58.7°N 05.3°W on 18 June 86 in the N Pacific (BG); there were 120 27m NE of Heligoland on 12 Apr 88 (MGW), and two dark birds in 60 at 58.7°N 05.3°W off Cape Wrath on 8 Jul 87 (ARL).

Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialisoides*. Two at 36.6°S 13.7°E on 28 Oct 86 (KS) and one at 42.4°S 37.2°E on 30 Dec 86 (ARL).

Cape Pigeon or Pintado Petrel *Daption capense*. Many reported all round the Southern Ocean, with up to 78 from between 21°-37°S in the Atlantic, 26°-49°S in the Indian Ocean, and 30°-47°S in the Pacific, and one at 11.1°S 104.7°W on 2 Sep 88 (RJT).

Prions *Pachyptila* sp. A number of records of totals sometimes running into hundreds between 36°-57°S in the S. Atlantic, many records from between 39°-52°S in the Indian Ocean, and one report from 46.7°S 159.4°W on 9 Jan 87 in the South Pacific (PN).

Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*. Many records of up to 10 between 21°-45°S and 07°-179°E.

White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii*. One at 53.4°S 60.0°W off the Falklands on 7 Jan 88 and again at 46.9°S 53.3°W next day (PN). Many records between 37°-52°S and 13°E-44°E, and one at 49.8°S 132.8°W on 1 Feb 87 rising to 5°-10 at 53.5°S 97.6°W on the 4th. (PN).

Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*. There were many records between 26°-49°S and 22°E-61°W, maximum 22 at 39.9°S 38.9°W on 30 Apr 87 (WFC), and at least 10 at 40.4°S 48.3°W on 9 Jan 88 (PN).

Mottled Petrel *Pterodroma inexpectata*. PN reported birds at 10.4°N 162.8°W on 30 Apr and 44.8°S 176.6°E on 30 Dec 87.

Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris*. In addition to the records around South Georgia reported last year WFC saw up to 68 daily at sea off the Falklands and South Georgia between 23 Mar-15 Apr 87, and ARL two at 41.1°S 39.1°E on 29 Dec 86 and one at 51.3°S 32.7°E on 5 Jan 87.

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*. Many records of up to 13 between 21°-46°S and 05°-55°E, while further south-west WFC also reported increasing totals of up to 68 daily off the Falklands and South Georgia between 7 Jan-17 Apr and 133 at 39.9°S 38.9°W on 30 Apr 87. MCL reported five probable 'Gon-gons' *P. (m.?) feae* south of S. Vincente in the Cape Verde Is. on 11 Apr 87, and two more, described as brownish-grey above and light below with a white chin and forehead, faint darker markings on the side of the breast, and 'W' markings over the wing and back, at 9.4°N 13.7°W on 13 May 88.

Tahiti Petrel *Pterodroma rostrata*. RGD reported two at 24.4°S 164.5°E off New Caledonia on 14 Jul and ten possibles at 16.3°S 178.4°E on 20 Jul 86, and PN several at 30.1°S 178.7°E on 13 Apr 87.

Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*. PN reported possibles at 16.9°N 140.2°W on 4 Apr and 08.3°N 140.2°W on 20 May 87.

Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*. PN reported birds in the central Pacific at 4.5°N 165.6°W on 29 Apr, 1.4°S 157.9°W on 22 May and 8.8°N 163.6°W on 29 Jul 87, and ARL four possibles at 25.0°S 51.5°E in the Indian Ocean on 21 Dec 86.

Capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata*. MS reported five at 26.2°N 76.3°W on 19 Aug 88.

Hawaiian Petrel *Pterodroma phaeopygia*. Eight reports between 06°-29°N 104°-172°W (RGD, PN).

White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma externa*. Nine reports between 32°S-21°N and 179°E-95°W.

Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma barau*. Up to four reported by ARL at 27.0°S 49.0°E on 22 Dec 86, 21.5°S 51.6°E on 29 Jan 87, 25.8°S 46.8°E two days later, and 22.3°S 54.0°E on 2 Nov 87.

Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*. Reported by PN at 30.1°S 178.7°E on 13 Apr 87, 1.3°S 168.1°W on 28 Apr 87 and 23°S 179°W on 24 Jul 87.

Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii*. Ten reports with varying degrees of certainty between 30°S-51°N and 87°-150°W.

Stejneger's and Gould's Petrels *Pterodroma longirostris* and *P. leucoptera*. There are six reports, probably involving some confusion between these forms, from between 8°-30°S and 87°-160°W.

Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*. There are six records of varying reliability from the breeding area between 5°-21°N and 52°-65°E between Jul and Sep, with a maximum of 25 over dolphins at 15.6°N 52.5°E on 29 Jul 87 (BG); outlying records at 11.4°N 70.8°E on 1 Oct 87 (ARL) and of a 'Mascarene Petrel' in the One and a Half Degree Channel between the Maldives on 21 Jul 87 (WW).

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*. There are many records of varying certainty from throughout its range. They include five from the N. Atlantic breeding range between 15°-37°N and 15°-37°W from Apr to Aug, with a possible at 22.2°N 57.5°W off the West Indies on 19 Mar 87 (MCL). There are 12 records of up to 25 from the breeding area between 1°-31°N 122°E-132°W in the N. Pacific between Apr-Aug, and nine of up to 4 from the the wintering area between 0°-111°S 75°-122°E along the equatorial counter-current in the Indian Ocean between Jul-Feb.

Grey or Brown Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*. Three at 49.4°S 61.3°W on 3 Feb 86, and 39.9°S 53.5°W next day (BW), and at 41.1°S 39.1°E on 29 Dec 86 (ARL).

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*. Numerous records all round the Southern Ocean; maximum 70 at 30.3°S 40.9°E on 2 Nov 86 (KS). One out of twelve birds seen by WFC at 39.9°S 38.9°W on 30 Apr 87 belonged to the form *P. a. conspicillata*.

Parkinson's Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*. Reported by PN at 36.0°S 178.4°E on 14 Apr. *Procellaria* petrels also seen at 32.8°S 178.0°E on 30 May and 39.6°S 177.8°E on 16 July 87.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*. Six records from the breeding area between 25°-45°N and 122°E-177°W in March and August. In the wintering area DMS saw six at 4.8°N 113.8°E on 23 Mar, five at 3.6°N 112.5°E and ten at 6.1°N 115.6°E on 16 Apr 87. In 1988 ARL saw 15 possibles at 8.9°S 125.7°E on 16 Feb, two at 0.2°S 132.1°E on 27 Feb and ca 30 at 10.7°S 128.8°E on 5 Mar.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*. There are nine reports from the Mediterranean during the period Mar-Oct along the route between the Port Said anchorage on 7 Jul 87 (WW) and Gibraltar, most from the vicinity of the Sicilian narrows, where PWJ saw 200 on 28 Apr 87. There are 30 reports from the N. Atlantic between Feb-Nov, mainly around the breeding islands at first, but extending north off western Europe later, when MGF saw two off Ushant on 29 Aug 88, later withdrawing south, when PN saw rafts of thousands at 24.4°N 16.4°W

off Mauretania on 11 Nov 87. There are six records from the southern winter quarters, where PN saw many at 28.3°S 12.9°E on 8 Dec 86, and ARL 14, described as grey-brown above with a darker tail, white underwings and yellow bills, in the southern Indian Ocean at 37.9°S 52.4°E on 15 Jan with four more around 38°S 23°E in Feb 87. MCL saw a possible returning migrant at 2.7°N 5.7°W on 23 Mar 87 and another at 2.2°S 2.3°E three days later.

Pink-footed Shearwater *Puffinus creatopus*. In '86 BW had one on board at 21.9°N 109.3°W on 8 Apr. He saw six at 18.1°S 75.8°W on 27 Jan and again at 18.1°S 75.8°W next day, two at 37.8°S 73.9°W on 30 Jan and ten at 46.5°S 75.9°W on 1 Feb, and BG reported 100 at 12.1°N 89.2°W on 4 Aug. In '87 PN reported many at 46.7°N 128.8°W off the Strait of Juan de Fuca on 23 June, a few at 45.4°N 124.9°W on 10 May, and several at 35.4°N 121.5°W on 27 June.

Pale- or Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*. In the Indian Ocean RGD saw 31 possibles at 18.3°S 116.0°E on 14 May 86, and 12 at 31.4°S 115.0°E on 18 May. RL saw two possibles among Wedge-tailed Shearwaters at 21.5°S 51.6°E on 29 Jan 87 and two at 17.9°N 64.8°E on 29 Sep 87. BG also saw at least three over dolphins at 15.6°N 52.5°E on 29 Jul 87 and 28 at 10.1°N 75.6°E on 11 Aug 87, and WW groups off Cape Guardafui on 14 Jul 87. In the Pacific PN reported several at 30.7°S 176.1°E on 10 June 87 and JG ca 300 at 44.0°N 147.7°E on 10 Aug 87.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. There were many reports from the N. Atlantic, where JWW saw the first three at 38°N 63°W on 3 Apr and seven more at 45°N 37°W three days later, and RCLA reported three as far NW as 55.7°N 08.5°W by 13 Apr in 87. WW found that small groups were still present in south Biscay and around Cape Finisterre on 21 Nov 86, and BG saw the last at 39.3°N 33.7°W on 5 Dec 86. Some of the most interesting observations relate to the poorly documented return migration. While surveying in the area between 17°-30°N 20-29°W off West Africa between 21 Aug-12 Sep 88 ARL had 12 records of up to 22. Sailing south at this season KS also saw one at 25.7°N 17.3°W on 9 Sep 86, 69 at 16.8°N 22.1°W on the 11th and nine at 12.5°N 24.4°W next day, and birds everywhere off Fernando de Noronha on the 16th, and Recife, NE Brazil, on 17th. In the S. Atlantic there are a number of reports from the area between 37°-41°S between Oct-Feb, when ARL saw one as far east as 36.6°S 43.8°E on 26 Dec 86. WFC also saw them off the Falklands and South Georgia between Feb-Apr, and 2,652 at 39.9°S 38.9°W on the way home on 30 Apr.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*. There are many records, some of which are uncertain. In the Indian Ocean small numbers were recorded 20 times between 20°N-32°S and 33°-128°E. They were only reported in the Arabian Sea north of 10°N between Jul-Oct, and the largest numbers occurred off NW Australia, including 200 at 14.6°S 119.1°E on 13 May 86 (RGD), and 14 possibles, of which four were in the pale phase, at 10.7°S 121.0°E on 13 Feb 88 (ARL). Up to 100 were also reported 27 times between 29°N-26°S and 138°E-89°W in

the Pacific and Tasman Sea. These were only seen north of 10°N in the area where the pale phase predominates between March and August; four were also reported as far south as 25.3°S 160.0°E on 13 Jul 86 (RGD), but since two were said to be in the pale phase, when it is rare in this area and birds ringed in this area usually migrate north in the winter, there may have been some mistake?

**Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus*. There are a number of records from the N. Atlantic between 10 Apr (MCL) and 11 Nov (PN), but ARL only saw two with the southward migration of Great Shearwaters off West Africa, at 26.9°N 29.4°W on 6 Sep 88 and 25.6°N 30.9°N next day. There are also regular records in the S. Atlantic south of 22°S, where WFC reported a remarkable congregation of 80,000 birds which may have come from South America off the Falklands on 28 Mar 87, with other records from around South Georgia, last year (*Sea Swallow* 37: 5). ARL also saw occasional birds at sea east to 42.7°S 50.8°E in the Indian Ocean on 13 Jan 87. In the western Pacific RGD saw 200 dark shearwaters with pale underwings flying north at 21.6°N 158.2°E on 2 May 86, 300 and 100 again at 18.6°N 155.8°E on 3rd, and one at 15.8°N 149.9°E on 4th. In the NE Pacific PN saw many, including a flock of hundreds, at 42.1°N 136.4°W on 22 June 87, many again at 46.7°N 128.8°W off the Strait of Juan de Fuca next day, and flocks of hundreds at 45.2°N 124.9°W on the 25th. In the S. Pacific he saw a few at 47.2°S 170.2°W on 8 Jan 87, several at 45.0°S 148.6°W on the 10th, one at 42.3°S 138.4°W next day, and 50 at 37.8°S 73.9°W on the 30th.

**Short-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus tenuirostris*. BG reported ca 100,000 at 54.3°N 164.6°W near Unimac Pass on 18 June 86.

**Christmas Shearwater** *Puffinus nativitatis*. In 87 PN reported many at 03.5°N 153.4°W in the central Pacific on 25 May, with several at 8.3°N 148.9°W on 20 May, 8.2°S 176.4°W on 13 June and 5.1°N 151.9°W on 4 Jul, and possibles at 0.4°S 156.9°W next day.

**Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus*. There are the usual records from the N. Atlantic summer range, including a report from MGW of seven feeding with dolphins on a fish shoal 57nm SE of Corvo in the Azores on 18 Jul 87. ARL only noticed one moving south off West Africa in the autumn, at 30.4°N 24.3°W on 13 Sep 88, and WW found several still present 5m off Cape Finisterre on 7 Jan 87. In the southern hemisphere WFC has already reported the occurrence of the first four off the Falklands on 17 Feb 87 (*Sea Swallow* 37: 6). In the North Pacific PN saw several of the local form Newell's Shearwater *P. (p.) newelli* off Oahu, Hawaii on 2 May 87, and many at 22.2°N 157.0°W next day.

**Yelkouan Shearwater** *Puffinus yelkouan*. It has recently been proposed that the Mediterranean representatives of the Manx Shearwater should be treated as a distinct species the Yelkouan Shearwater (*British Birds* 86: 301-319). WW reported small groups off Giglio and Elba on 30 Nov, at 31.8°N 30.5°E off the Nile delta on 1 Dec 86, and at 36.7°N 03.4°W approaching Gibraltar on 5 Jan 87. PWJ saw ten at 37.0°N 12.7°E in the Sicilian Channel on 18 Mar 87, and MGW a bird of the Balearic

race *P. (y.) mauretanicus* in the Atlantic 50nm west of Tarifa on 1 Dec 86. PN saw one of their Pacific representative, the Black-vented Shearwater *Puffinus opisthomelas*, at 35.4°N 121°W on 27 June 87.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*. There are several records from the N. Atlantic range off West Africa, including a small flock reported by PN at 24.4°N 16.4°W on 11 Nov 87, and birds seen by ARL at 35.0°N 20.0°W on 24 Jul 88 and 29.9°N 34.7°W on 28 Jun. In the southern hemisphere he also saw four at 44.9°S 33.7°E on 1 Jan 87 and individuals at 40.2°S 19.8°E on 12 Feb 87 and 41.3°S 20.5°E on 20 Feb 88. Further east off New Zealand PN reported many at 32.8°S 178.0°E on 30 May 87 and others at 39.6°S 177.8°E on 16 Jul 87 and at 39.0°S 178.2°E three days later.

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*. There are several possible but inadequately documented records for the tropical Atlantic and Caribbean. In the Pacific RGD also saw a possible at 05.6°S 163.7°W in central Polynesia on 24 Jul 86, ARL another at 0.5°N 134.4°E off NW New Guinea (a new area) on 28 Feb 88, and RLW two more with Chichi Shida bearing 102° x 192nm on 25 Mar 87 (this is not shown in my atlas, but is presumably somewhere south of Japan?). In the Indian Ocean WW saw many off Cape Guardafui, Somalia, on 14 Jul 87, BG probable birds at 16.8°N 41.0°E on 2 Feb 87 and 12.2°N 49.5°E on 17 Apr 88, WW one at 07.7°N 53.6°E in the One and a Half Degree Channel of the Maldives on 21 Jul 87, and ARL four possibles at 22.2°S 54.5°E on 20 Dec 86 and two at 21.5°S 51.6°E on 29 Jan 87.

### STORM-PETRELS *Hydrobatidae*

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. There are the usual summer records from the N. Atlantic and Arabian Sea. Off southern India BG saw 50 with dolphins, a sea snake and crabs at 09.2°N 76.1°E on 11 Aug 87, and ARL one at 7.8°N 76.2°E on 2 Oct 87. Further south he and KS saw up to five twelve times between 25°-51°S and 51°E-10°W from Oct 86 to Feb 87.

White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*. A photograph taken by KS of a bird which came on board at 30.4°N 15.0°W on 8 Sep 86 shows that it belonged to the Cape Verde race *P. m. eadesi*.

Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica*. ARL reported up to five on nine occasions between 40°-51°S and 34°-52°E in the southern Indian Ocean in Dec 86 and Jan 87, and one at 14.6°N 67.8°E in the wintering area to the north in the Arabian Sea on 30 Sep 87. PN also reported 2-4 *Fregetta* storm-petrels at 40.4°S 48.3°W in the S. Atlantic on 9 Jan 88, and WFC probable *F. tropica* at 6°S 14.8°W to the north on 8 May 87. Similarly PN reported a probable at 42.3°S 138°W in the S. Pacific on 11 Jan 87, RGD a storm-petrel with white underparts at 06.9°N 90.5°W to the north on 10 Aug 86, and PN several possible *Fregettas* at 01.4°S 157.9°E on 22 May 87.

White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria*. In the S. Atlantic KS watched one down to 60m for 15 mins off Recife, Brazil on 17 Sep 86. In the Southern Ocean KS saw birds at 36.6°S 19.8°E on 30 Oct 87

and 34.1°S 30.1°E on 1 Nov 87, and ARL one at 40.2°S 18.6°E on 18 Feb 87. In the Indian Ocean WW saw one at 09.7°N 52.2°E on 15 Jul 87 and a few at 07.7°N 53.6°E the next day and 05.3°N 54.9°E on 17 Jun.

White-throated Storm-petrel *Nesofregatta fuliginosa*. PN reported one at 13.1°N 144.3°W on 1 May 87. Two storm-petrels with white rumps and bellies which RGD identified as this species at 26.4°S 15.1°E in the Tasman Sea on 1 Jul 86 could also have been the previous one.

British Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*. While we have several reports which are probably referable to this species from the usual range off western Europe and South Africa, they are usually only referred to as 'Storm Petrels' so that it is difficult to tell whether this species or an unidentified member of the family *Hydrobatidae* is intended. It would be helpful if people could make it clearer which is meant.

Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. In the Atlantic MGW had one on board in a fog in the Gulf of the St Lawrence 32nm south of Anticosti Island on 17 Aug 87. RJMW & RPNW had another possible on board at 34°N 47°W on 16 Jan 88, and they were also reported at 01.1°S 00.2°E on 26 Mar and 06.8°S 10.6°E on 31 Mar 87. MCL reported one at 02.2°S 02.3°E on 28 Mar 87 and at least six, one an albino, at 06.1°N 10.6°E on 8 Apr 87, with similar numbers at 09.7°N 16.5°W next day. JWW also saw three at 47°N 33.5°W on 21 Mar 88. In the Pacific JG reported ca 20 at 53.9°N 175.4°E on 14 Aug 87, PN one at 42.8°N 135.4°W on 7 May 87, a dark bird at 45.4°N 124.9°W three days later, and many at 46.7°N 128.8°W off the Strait of Juan de Fuca on 23 Jun 87. BW had two on board at 21.9°N 109.3°W on 8 Apr 86, and RGD reported one at 06.5°N 104.5°W on 7 Aug 86.

Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma matsudairae*. In 1987 WW first saw two in the central Indian Ocean at 02.2°S 86.8°E on 24 Jul, then several at 03.3°S 91.4°E on 25th and a few at 04.4°S 96.3°E on 26th, two at 05.4°S 100.7°E on the 27th, and two again within 6nm of Manuk I. and at 05.3°S 130.2°E in the Banda Sea on 11 Aug, noticing the white primary shafts. ARL also reported at least ten possibles in the central Indian Ocean at 14.6°N 67.8°E on 30 Sep and 15 at 11.4°N 70.8°E next day.

## DIVING-PETRELS PELECANOIDIDAE

Common Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix*. While the identification of these presents difficulties until they come close enough for the shape of the nostrils and any dark markings on the legs and feet to be seen, it may be worth noting that RGD saw five at 29.3°S 153.7°E off eastern Australia on 10 Jul 86 which in that area were doubtless this species. ARL saw one at 50.7°S 42.5°E on 9 Jan 87 and had another on board at 49.7°S 43.4°E next day which was said to have a 'dirty white' underwing and blue legs so that it may have been this species as well.

## TROPICBIRDS PHAETHONTIDAE

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*. DMS reports that in the autumn of '86 it was reasonably common around Zerqa I. in the lower



Persian/Arabian Gulf, while in February 87 he saw up to four 17 times in the Gulf of Oman and northern Arabian Sea. Here ARL also saw birds at 17.9°N 64.8°E on 28 Sep 87, 14.6°N 67.8°E the next day, and 11.4°N 70.8°E on 1 Oct. WW saw a few off Cape Guardafui on 14 Jul 87 and at 07.7°N 53.6°E on 16 Jul, and one at 05.3°N 54.9°E next day. In the Atlantic MCL saw 500 around the cays at St Eustatius (17.5°N 63.0°W) on 20-24 Feb 88 and several at 15.8°N 26.9°W on 21 Mar, 11.9°N 63.8°W on 27 Mar, 03.6°S 4.7°E on 5 Apr, 19.3°N 61.4°W on 30 Apr and 18.0°N 42.0°W on 3 May; ARL saw an immature at 26.4°N 33.7°W on 17 Aug 88. In the east Pacific PN saw one at 03.8°N 82.1°W on 20 Jan 87 and JG one at 14.0°N 96.2°W on 15 Sep 87. Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*. Birds were seen in the Indian Ocean by JGWD at 01.7°S 69.8°E on 6 Apr 87, WW at 05.4°S 100.7°E on 27 Jul 87, and ARL at 10.4°S 111.1°E on 9 Feb 88. WW saw 20 at 05.3°S 130.2°E 6m off Manuk I. in the Banda Sea on 11 Aug 87, and in the Pacific ARL saw six at 0.5°N 134.4°E NW of New Guinea on 28 Feb 88, and SM birds at 20.3°S 142.7°W in the Tuamotus on 15 Oct 88, 23.5°S 114.5° on 2 Nov 88, and 22.7°S 112.6°E on 7 Nov 88.

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*. In the N. Atlantic MCL saw birds at 27.7°N 62.7°W on 3 Jun 88 and 25.9°N 75.8°W two days later, and ARL saw one or two on three occasions around 26°N 45°W in Aug 88. In the Indian Ocean MGF saw three at 10.0°N 60.7°E in the central Arabian Sea on 31 Jan 88, KS saw one at 20.9°S 55.0°E near the Mascarenes on 4 Dec 86, ARL saw three probables at 18.6°S 62.4°E on 31 Oct 87 and one at 8.9°S 78.4°E on the 24 Oct 87. WW saw one at 02.2°S 86.8°E on 26 Jul 87, ARL saw five at 09.6°S 107.1°E on 7 Feb 88, including one of the yellow form *P. l. fulvus* nesting at Christmas Island nearby, and RGD saw two at 10.9°S 122.2°E off Timor on 12 May 86, 11 at 14.6°S 119.1°E next day, and one at 7.0°S 125.9°E in the Banda Sea on 11 May 86. He saw another 22.5°S 154.2°E in the Coral Sea on 8 Jun 86, and many in the Pacific in this year, including 13 at 7.2°N 138.3°E on 7 May, 20 at 7.4°N 151.0°E on 2 Jul and four at 2.9°N 152.7°E next day in the Carolines; individuals which probably belonged to this species at 10.6°N 142.6°E on 6 May, 18.6°N 155.8°E on 3 May, 20.6°N 145.9°E on 29 Jun, 3.7°N 152.3°E on 13 Jun, 8.6°N 150.8°E next day, 16.4°N 147.6°E on 30 Jun, 5.1°S 150.2°W on 28 Jul, 6.4°N 141.5°W on 30 Jul, 6.3°N 136.8°W next day and 6.7°N 127.6°W on 2 Aug. PN identified at least two of this species among a number of tropicbirds seen at 11.4°S 172.6°W north of Samoa on 26 Jul 87, and one seen with two others at 22.8°N 133.6°W on 17 May 87.

#### **PELICANS PELICANIDAE**

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchus*. JG saw seven at 37°N 12°W, 30nm off San Francisco, on 8 Sep 87.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*. W & W had one on board at 00.4°S 91.2°W south of the Galapagos on 15 Feb 88.

## GANNETS AND BOOBIES *SULIDAE*

Northern Gannet *Sula bassana*. The most notable records from the Atlantic include over 100 seen by BG at 33.5°N 80.8°W off South Carolina on 23 Feb 88, numbers seen by WW off Capes Finisterre and St Vincent on 6 and 7 Jan 87, and 10-50 seen by PN on 11 Nov 87 and 12 seen by MCL on 18 May 88 around 25°N 15°W off Mauretania. We are also getting an increasing number of records from the Mediterranean; they include ten seen by WW at 36.7°N 3.4°W off Morocco on 5 Jan 87 and several which he reported at 36.6°N 03.9°E off Algeria on 24 Nov 86, several which he saw at 37.5°N 11.0°E on 25 Nov 86, one seen by PWJ at 37.4°N 10.8°E on 30 Mar 87, and 200 (30 adult, 40 intermediate and over 100 immature) at 37.5°N 11.0°E on 28 Apr 87 off Tunisia, two seen by MJA between Turkey and Port Said on 10 Mar 88, and four seen by WW in the northern Tyrrhenian Sea off Giglio and Elba on 30 Nov 86.

Cape Gannet *Sula capensis*. In addition to the usual records of the southern gannets, PN saw this species at 17.5°S 3.7°E, 445nm from land half way between Africa and St Helena, on 6 Dec 86.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*. There are several records from the Caribbean area, and elsewhere in the Atlantic JWG also reported birds far from land at 17°N 32°W on 7 Aug 88 and 3°N 32°W three days later, and 13 30nm off Fernando de Noronha on 11 Jul 88. PN also saw three at 6.7°S 30.6°W in this region on 14 Jan 88. There are many records from the east Pacific, but in contrast to the other widespread boobies few from further west, and it is not clear if there has been some confusion here. SM saw one at 29.7°S 87.2°W on 14 Nov 88, PN several at 2.7°S 86.3°W on 19 Jan 87 and many at 3.8°N 92.4°W next day, and JG eight at 12.6°N 92.4°W on 16 Sep 87. There are two large series of records from the central Pacific. Sailing east in the equatorial counter-current in 86 RGD saw two at 0.2°S 157.0°W on 26 Jul, 28 at 2.5°S 153.6°W next day, two at 5.1°S 150.2°W on the 28th, and birds at 5.9°S 145.9°W the next day, 6.4°N 141.5°W on 30 Jul, 6.5°N 136.8°W the next day, 6.5°N 132.1°W on 1 Aug, and 6.4°N 109.2°W on 6 Aug. In '87 PN saw two at 6.3°N 150.6°W on 4 Apr, one at 1.3°S 168.1°W on 28 Apr and 8.3°N 148.9°W on 20 May, several at 3.5°N 153.4°W next day, two at 1.4°S 157.9°W on 22 May, several over a fish shoal at 14.5°S 178.0°W on 12 June, one at 0.4°S 156.9°W on 5 July and 5.8°N 162.0°W next day, and several at 18.0°S 175.6°W on 25 Jul. Further south SM saw two at 24°S 130.7°W in the Tuamotus on 8 Oct 88, and RGD birds off eastern Australia at 15.3°S 154.6°E on 7 Jul 86, 26.4°S 155.1°E on 12 Jul 86 and 24.4°S 164.5°E next day. To the north BW saw a possible at 31.5°N 172.1°E on 29 Mar 86. In the East Indies ARL saw two at 7.3° 125.9°E in the Banda Sea on 18 Feb 88. In the central Indian Ocean WW saw three at 2.2°S 86.8°E on 24 Jul 87, there are six records from the Chagos area, and JGWD saw one at 7.5°N 57.3°E on 18 Feb 87. DMS saw a total of 67 in small parties between Oman and India in mid Feb-87, with 60 around 19.3°N 63.5°E on the 19th, and there are three records from the entrance to the Red Sea.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*. In the Atlantic there were several around the West Indies, and JWG saw 100 120nm NE of Fernando de Noronha on 11 Jul 88. Birds were seen between 4°-22°N along the east coast of the Pacific. Further west RGD saw one at 6.5°N 104.5°W on 7 Aug 86, two at 22.8°S 168.9°E near New Caledonia on 17 Jul 86, and one at 24.7°S 154.2° on 8 Jul 86 and 17.5°S 154.5°E on 9 Jun 86, and five at 12.1°S 154.3°E next day, in the Coral Sea. BG saw one at 17.5°N 122.5°E off the Philippines on 6 Sep 87, RGD two at 25.0°N 144.0°E east of Iwo Shima on 28 Jun 88 and WW several groups at 24.9°N 122.3°E passing Senkaku-Shoto I. in the Ryukyu Is. on 21 Aug 87. There are a number of records in the East Indies, where WW saw many at 5.3°S 130.2°E off Manuk I. on 11 Aug 87, RGD six at 1.4°N 130.7°E on 9 May 86 and 81 at 7.0°S 125.9°E two days later. ARL had five records of up to six around 5°S 126°E and two around 10°S 109°E in Feb-Mar 88, and DMS saw ca 100 in small groups off NW Borneo in Mar-May 87 but none in Jun-Sep. BG saw one 50nm south of Socotra on 16 Apr 88, and there are four records from the south and one from the north Red Sea.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*. In the Atlantic MCL saw 34 at 16.8°N 67.8°W in the Mona Passage on 26 Apr 87. There are records from throughout the tropical Pacific, where PN some at 3.8°N 82.1°W on 20 Jan 87, BG two at 12.1°N 89.2°W on 4 Aug 86, RGD at 0.2°S 157.0°W on 26 Jul 86, PN birds at 2.0°S 171.3°W on 14 Jun, 2.1°N 169.6°W on 28 Jul and 18.0°S 175.6°W on 27 Jul 87, JWG one at 15°S 151E on 16 Jan 88, RGD birds at 22.5°S 154.2°E on 8 Jun, 22.8°S 168.9°E on 15 Jul, 36 probables at 16.3°S 178.4°E on 20 Jul 87 and one at 16.4N 147E on 30 Jun 86. BG saw 78 at 17.6N 113.4E on 18 Aug 87, and ARL 12 at 00.5°N 134.4°E on 28 Feb 88. He had seven records of up to 100 around 7°S 126°E in the Banda Sea in Feb-Mar 88. WW saw large concentrations here at 5.3°S 130.2°E, 6nm off Manuk I. on 11 Aug 87, and also saw many at 7.9°S 118.7°E in the Flores Sea on 31 Jul 87. In the Indian Ocean ARL saw several at 9.6°S 107.1°E on 7 Feb 88, 11.1°S 114.8°E on 10 Feb 88 and 11.1°S 118.8°E next day, JWGD saw eight at 5.5°S 74.7°E on 21 Feb 87 and three at 1.7°S 69.8°E on 6 Apr 87 and MGF saw birds at 3.5°S 72.5°E on 20 Feb 88 and 7.4°S 69.2°E on 21st, and KS saw some at 10.8°S 70.8°E on 10 Nov 86, 8.1°S 74.7°E on 11th, 6.2°S 77.3°E on 29 Nov and 9.6°S 72.6°E on 30th, near the Chagos group. WW saw several at 7.7°S 73.6°E while passing the One and a Half Degree Channel on 21 Jul 87, and ARL saw one at 26.2°S 45.9°E off southern Madagascar on 31 Jan 87.

### **CORMORANTS PHALACROCORACIDAE**

Common or Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*. WW saw many in Izmir harbour on 25-26 Dec 86, and there are several records of up to 30 from around the Suez Canal. MJE saw three at Aqaba on 13 Mar 88, and BW hundreds at Karachi on 1 Mar 86.



Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*

Photo: Captain S. D. Mayl, MN

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*. MJE reports three at Fethiye, SE Turkey, on 9 Mar and four near Delos, Greece, on 22 Mar 1988.

Kerguelen Cormorant *Phalacrocorax verrucosus*. PN saw one at 48.2°S 66.9°E when passing Kerguelen on the evening of 4 Dec 86.

#### **FRIGATEBIRDS FREGATIDAE**

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*. There are a number of records from both coasts of central America, none far out to sea, including an estimate by MCL of about a thousand breeding at Cay Arcos at 20.3°N 92.0°W off western Yucatan on 5-7 Feb 88.

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*. In the Indian Ocean WW reported small groups at 7.7°N 73.6°E when passing the Maldives on 21 Jul 87, KS two birds at 9.6°S 72.6°E near the Chagos group on 30 Nov 86, and JGWD had several records far from land in 87, including a female at 23.4°S 99.1°E on 25 Feb, and three at 1.7°S 69.8°E on 6 Apr and 3.3°N 63.0°E next day. In the East Indies DMS saw a black male off NW Sabah on 28 Sep 87 and ARL two possibles at 11.1°S 118.8°E south of Sumba on 11 Feb 88. In the west Pacific RGD saw two possibles at 07.2°N

138.3°E north of New Guinea on 7 May 86, one at 15.8°N 149.9°E off the Marianas on 4 May, five at 10.7°S 154.5°E near the Louisiades on 6 Jul and ten at 22.8°S 169.9°E near New Caledonia on 15 Jul in 87; JWG saw one 100nm north of Truk on 21 Jan 88. In the central Pacific PN saw a large frigate at 4.9°S 169.6°W off the Phoenix group on 27 Jul 87, two at 1.0°S 155.8°W off the Line group on 5 Apr 87, and a dark bird off Honolulu on 18 Jun 87. In the east Pacific RGD saw some at sea NW of the Galapagos at 6.4°N 109.2°W on 6 Aug 86 and 6.5°N 104.5°W next day.



Magnificent Frigatebirds  
overflying the Royal Yacht, *Britannia*, Galapagos  
Photo:Ldg. Airman (Phot.) M. V. Wellings, RN

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*. In the Indian Ocean WW also reported small groups of this species at 7.7°N 73.6°E in the One and a Half Degree Channel on 21 Jul 87, and ARL two possible examples at 5.7°S 74.3°E off the Chagos group on 26 Oct 87. DMS saw two males with several unidentified immatures at 6.6°N 116.1°E off west Borneo on 27 Sep 87, RGD three possibles at 16.3°S 178.4°E north of Fiji on 20 Jul 86, two possible birds at 0.2°S 157.0°W on 26 Jul, and three at 2.5°S 153.6°W on 27 Jul off the Line group in '86, and one at 5.6°S 163.7°W off the Phoenix group on 24 Jul 86, where PN also saw three possibles at 1.3°S 168.1°W on 28 Apr 87.

Christmas Frigatebird *Fregata andrewsi*. It has usually been assumed that this species, which is only known to breed on the remote Indian Ocean Christmas Island, where it is at risk from the disturbance associated with phosphate mining, must be rather marine, although it has been reported around the East Indies in the past. On 21 Apr 87 DMS saw ca 12 frigates off Mangalun I., W Borneo, one of which had the white breast extending as a long spur on to the underwing so that it may have been a Christmas Frigatebird; the following autumn he reported that it was the commonest frigatebird off the coast of Sabah where it was usually encountered in groups of up to 50 near offshore islands. Its status clearly requires further study.

#### PHALAROPES PHALAROPOPIDAE

Grey or Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*. RCLA reported two at 56.4°N 13.9°W near Rockall on 13 Sep 87, and WW a few at 24.9°N 122.5°E off Senkakju Shoto I. in the Ryukyu group on 21 Aug 87.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*. DMS saw 80 at 22.2°N 60.3°E in the Gulf of Oman on 18 Feb, flushed 200 at night at the Sunarung Offshore Oilfield, W Borneo, on 23 Sep, and saw many on the water during rain in Victoria Harbour, Labuan, on the night of 28/29 Sep in 1987. Further east ARL saw 25 at 1.4°S 126.7°E on 22 Feb, two at 0.5°N 134.4°E on 28 Feb, 25 on the equator at 133.3°E next day, 16 at 3.1°S 127.2°E on 2 Mar and 25 at 7.4°S 127.6°E on 4 Mar in 1988.

#### SKUAS AND JAEGERs STERCORARIIDAE

Great Skua *Catharacta* sp. Most of the large skuas were identified as Great Skuas *C. skua* in the north and Southern, Antarctic or Brown Skuas *C. (S.) antarctica* in the south, though it was suggested that a few, indicated with asterisks (\*), were McCormick's Skuas, discussed later. There were the usual records from the N. Atlantic, the most southerly seen by ARL at 27.9°N 27.7°W on 9 Sep 88\* and PN at 09.3°N 16.3°W on 13 Nov 87. Several were also seen in the western Mediterranean by WW at 36.6°N 03.9°E on 24 Nov 86, and one at 37.6°N 10.4°E by PWJ on 30 Mar 87. WFC has already reported how he saw an influx of skuas among other species into the Falklands in the southern autumn of 87 (*Sea Swallow* 37: 6-7); they included 40 Great and four McCormick's\* Skuas off Albemarle Rock on 7 Feb, 65 Great Skuas 6 nm off George I. on 28 Mar, 90 Great and 14 McCormick's\* Skuas in

Choiseul Sound on 30 Mar and 110 Great and 12 McCormick's\* Skuas there next day. Large skuas were also reported at sea many times between 29°-50°S all round the Southern Ocean: at 18.6°S 62.4°E in the Mozambique Channel by ARL on 31 Oct 87, at 07.7°N 53.6°E off the Maldives by WW on 21 Jul 87, at 01.4°N 129.9°E off NW New Guinea\* by ARL on 26 Feb 88, at 31.1°N 132.9°E off southern Japan by WW on 23 Aug 87, and by PN at 02.7°S 86.3°W east of the Galapagos\* on 19 Jan and 20.9°N 135.8°W between Mexico and Hawaii\* on 1 Jul in 87.

McCormick's or South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*. The identification of this bird is complicated by the fact that while the adults occur in both light and dark forms, the young birds which disperse north are usually dark and difficult to tell from the other large skuas. WFC reports that most of those he identified in the Falklands were pale, and there may have been additional dark ones. PN merely identified the ones seen in the NE Pacific in 87 as the dark phase. ARL described the bird seen off New Guinea in Feb 88 as slighter than a 'Bonxie' and chocolate brown above with diagonal wing-bars and off-white/buff below with a collar round the neck making the face appear pale, and the possible 'Bonxie' seen with a dark Pomarine Skua off West Africa in Sep 88 as entirely dark brown with an almost black head and white wing flashes which were more prominent below. European records of the species are discussed elsewhere in this journal (pp. 63-4).

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*. There are a number of records from the N. Atlantic between 40°-69°N and 4°E-53°W, and off West Africa and western tropical America during Mar-May and Aug-Sep, including a dark adult at 27.9°N 27.7°W on 9 Sep 88 (ARL). JGWD saw one at 3.5°N 63.0°E in the central Indian Ocean on 7 Apr 87, DMS up to ten off NW Borneo in Mar-Apr 87, KS one at 1.6°N 138.5°E north of New Guinea on 12 Aug 87, and PN several off Sydney on 24-25 Dec 86. BW reported that on 13 Apr 86 a small group of about 12 Pominines with two Arctic Skuas and 20 Laughing Gulls were seen all day in Cartagena Bay, Columbia. Most of the Pominines had no projecting tail-feathers, and they varied in colour from almost black to light honey-brown. Some had no white on the upperparts, while others were as mottled above as Cape Pigeons. Some had white upper rumps and dark tail bands, and most were heavily barred on the belly and under tail coverts. They did not mob the gulls, but often paddled over the water while feeding, and were sometimes themselves mobbed by frigatebirds. JWW also reports that one was photographed taking McVitie's Digestive Biscuits from the hand at 40°N 53°W on 4 Apr 87; the extent to which skuas parasitise other species is sometimes exaggerated.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*. There are rather few records for the Atlantic; FJA saw one at 58.5°N 09.7°W off the Hebrides on 3 May 87, PN 50-100 Arctic and other skuas at 16.9°N 17.7°W off West Africa on 12 Nov 87, MCL a dark bird at 18.3°N 74.8°W in the Caribbean on 7 Mar 88, and WFC saw two pale birds off the Falklands on 7 Feb 87. (*Sea Swallow* 37: 6). In contrast, in Mar 88 MJE saw a number of



Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* feeding from the hand,  
West Atlantic

Photo: Captain J. W. Welch, MN

birds flying north in the eastern Mediterranean and Red Sea, including one off Patmos on the 8th, eight between Turkey and Port Said on the 10th, two following the Suez Canal next day, four off Safaga at the mouth of the Gulf of Suez on the 15th, and one off Rhodes on the 21st. PN reported three at 3.8°N 82.1°W on 20 Jan 87, and two off Lyttelton, New Zealand on 14 Apr 87.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*. FJA reported one at 69.3°N 07.2°E off north Norway on 8 May 87. GDL one off the Shetlands on 15 Apr 88, KS a 'dark morph' at 27.7°S 26.4°W on 22 Oct 86, WFC three immatures at 51.8°S 56.1°W off the Falklands on 23 Mar 87, and DMS three at 9.9°N 72.3°E off the Laccadives on 22 Feb 87, described as much more slender than Arctic or Pomarine Skuas with a more tern-like flight, greyer above with the white shafts confined to the outer webs of the primaries, and in at least one some white on the rump.

#### GULLS LARIDAE

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*. GDL saw an immature in the east Greenland ice on 25 Apr 88, and another at the ice edge next day.

White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus*. WW reported two on buoys off Port Said on 7 Jul 87, several on buoys off Suez next day, and birds at 26.8°N 34.6°E and 14.0°N 42.8°E at opposite ends of the Red Sea on 9 and 12 Jul 87. MJE reported that 70 came to roost off Safaga at the mouth of the Gulf of Suez on 15 Mar 88.



Sooty or Aden Gull *Larus hemprichii*. There is one report from the northern Red Sea which does not say how the birds were distinguished from White-eyed Gulls, which are commoner there. BG saw three at 16.8°N 41.0°E at the south end of the Red Sea on 2 Feb 87, and WW some at 14.0°N 42.8°E nearby on 12 Jul 87 and many off Cape Guardfui two days later.

Japanese Gull *Larus crassirostris*. JG reported hundreds with petrels and shearwaters around fishing boats 30 nm SE of Ostrou Urup in the Kuriles throughout the late afternoon of 10 Aug 87.

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouini*. MGW saw three adults 30 nm west of Corsica on 3 Dec 86, and MJE two off Patmos, Greece on 8 Mar 88. Common Gull *Larus canus*. PCD recorded that the maximum in the North Sea during the spring of 1987 was 81 at 56.4°N 02.1°E on 9 Apr, which agrees with the peak of the spring migration elsewhere; PN reported one unusually far south at 31.7°N 13.7°W on 10 Nov 87.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* and Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans*. The classification of the Herring-type gulls of the Old World is currently in a state of flux, but since few people try to tell the different forms apart they are treated collectively here. There are records of members of the group from all round western Europe and the Mediterranean, and BG also reported two at 16.8°N 41.0°E at the south end of the Red Sea on 2 Feb 87, and BW several hundred (possibly including some members of the next group?) at Karachi on 1 Mar 86. While passing through the Suez Canal on 11 Mar 88 MJE noticed that a bird in the Great Bitter Lake had a pale back and pink legs.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, Heuglin's Gull *L. heuglini* and Armenian Gull *L. armenicus*. The gulls of this group present similar problems, and are treated in the same way. GDL reported that a Scandinavian Lesser Black-back *L.f.fuscus* was already present in the East Greenland ice on 26 Apr 86, and there are numerous records of birds of unspecified race from the west coast of Europe and throughout the Mediterranean, with the British race *L.f.graellsii* only identified west of the Sicilian Channel, and most birds of the Scandinavian race to the east of it. MJE saw 50 of these and two with paler backs which may have belonged to the form *heuglini* between Turkey and Port Said on 10 Mar 88, and 90, including ten pale-backed birds with 'ringed' bills which doubtless belonged to the form *armenicus*, along the Suez Canal next day, 65 off Safage at the mouth of the Gulf of Suez on 15 March, and 105 in the Gulf of Suez two days later on their northward migration. BG saw five at 16.8°N 41.0°E at the south end of the Red Sea on 2 Feb 87, MGF one at 11.2°N 55.2°E off Socotra on 30 Jan 88, and BW possibles among supposed Herring Gulls (which actually seem more likely to be pale-backed eastern races of Lesser Black-back) off Karachi on 1 Mar 86, and 2-3 off Bombay two days later.

Western Gull *Larus occidentalis*. PN saw many off the Juan de Fuca Strait at 45.4°N 124.9°W on 10 May and at 46.N 128.W on 26 Jun 87. Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*. PN reported several at 46.7°N 128.8°W approaching the Juan de Fuca Strait on 23 Jun 87, and many at 35.4°N 121.5°W on 27 Jun.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*. There are several records of birds seen by meteorologists and others off the Hebrides, the most being nine seen by PWGC at 60.7°N 2.8°W on 10 Nov 83. In the NW Pacific JG saw two at 41.7°N 142.7°E on 9 Aug 87 and JWG two at 49.7°N 163.3°E on 3 Mar 88.

Iceland Gull *Larus leucopterus*. GDL reported some with larger numbers of Glaucous Gulls in the East Greenland ice on 25 Apr 88.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*. BW saw one at Karachi on 1 Mar 86, and MJE 86, over half adult, along the Suez Canal on 11 Mar 88, but only two when he returned on the 18th.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*. There are nine records from all round the Mediterranean between late Nov and late Mar, and WW saw several adults in breeding plumage off Port Said on 7 Jul 87.

Brown-headed or Indian Black-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*. BW saw a few off Karachi on 1 Mar and 10 approaching Bombay on 3 Mar 86, and MGF 10-20 off Chittagong on 10 Feb 88.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*. Numerous records from western Europe throughout the year and the Mediterranean Nov-Mar; BW saw thousands off Karachi on 1 Mar and tens off Bombay on 3 Mar 86, and DMS three in Victoria Harbour, Labuan, Borneo on 18 and 20 Mar 87.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*. WW saw small groups off Port Said on 7 Jul 87, several along the Suez Canal next day, and one at 26.8°N 34.6°E in the north Red Sea on the 9th. MJE saw one between Turkey and Port Said on 10 Mar 88, nine along the Suez Canal next day, and over 40 come to roost off Safaga at the north end of the Red Sea on 15 Mar.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*. The Meteorological observers reported one at about 56°N 14°W in the Atlantic NW of Ireland on 15 Nov 87, WW one in Syros harbour, Greece during 9-24 Dec 86, and MJE 22 between Turkey and Port Said on 10 Mar with one off Rhodes on 21 Mar 88.

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*. MCL reported one at 10.3°N 16.8°W on 12 May 88 and ARL one at 58.7°N 12.6°W on 29 Jun and seven at 43.2°N 9.4°W on 27 Sep 87. There are also two reports of birds seen in the vicinity of the Azores in December and February, when Kittiwakes are commoner there and Sabine's Gulls are normally wintering in the S. Atlantic; it would be helpful if fuller descriptions were given with such records.

Red-legged Kittiwake *Rissa brevirostris*. JG reported five at 52.1°N 167.4°E off the Aleutians on 12 Aug 87.

Common or Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*. There are a number of records from the temperate N. Atlantic, south to 32.3°N 10.4°W off Morocco on 20 Jan 88 (PN), and WW saw birds at 36.2°N 3.7°W in the Mediterranean on 23 Nov 86. In the Pacific eight were seen by JG at 52.1°N 167.4°E on 12 Aug 87, three at 53.5°N 178.3°E next day, and PN saw one at 42.8°N 135.4°W on 7 May 87.

## TERNs STERNIDAE

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*. DMS found it fairly common on the Sungei Miri (Miri River) and surrounding area, Sarawak, on 17-18 Oct 87.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucoptera*. DMS saw one in breeding plumage in Victoria Harbour, Labuan, Borneo, on 10 May 87. Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*. WW saw one at Ismailia while passing through the Suez Canal on 8 Jul 87, and MJE two at Suez on 11 Mar and three off Safaga at the mouth of the Gulf of Suez on 15 Mar 88. BW saw one at Karachi on 1 Mar 86.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. MJE saw up to seven between Turkey and Suez on four days in late Mar 88. WW saw several off Port Said on 7 Jul 87, and non-breeding birds at 24.9°N 122.5°E off Senkaku-Shoto I. north of Taiwan on 21 Aug 87. DMS saw a number of probable birds off western Borneo in Aug and Sep 87, and had a good view of one at 3.5°N 112.4°E off Sarawak on 19 Sep.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisea*. FJA reported one at 58.5°N 9.7°W off the Hebrides on 3 May 87, and MCL 1-3 at 9.7°N 16.5°W off west Africa on 9 Apr 87. ARL saw up to four unidentified terns which were doubtless this species on migration around 28°N 19°-27°W on five days between 21 Aug-9 Sep 88. It also seems likely that three birds identified by KS as Antarctic Terns *Sterna vittata* at 35.5°S 1.6°E on 27 Oct 86, one at 36.2°S 7.7°E next day, 15 at 36.6°S 13.7°E the day after, and unidentified birds at 36.6°S 19.8°E on 31 Oct with ten at 35.4°S 25.1°E next day were really also Arctic Terns.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*. 28 possibles reported by MCL at 6.1°N 11.4°W on 8 Apr 87.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*. PN reported some in the central Pacific at 9.6°S 165.9°W on 7 Apr, 16.4°S 176.2°E on 10 Apr, 7.2°S 170.7°W on 27 Apr and 6.2°S 162.3°W on 23 May 87. DMS reported that they were common off western Borneo in the spring and autumn of 87, though possibly scarcer than ten years ago.

Spectacled or Grey-backed Tern *Sterna lunata*. PN saw some in the central Pacific at 1.4°S 157.9°W on 22 May and 2.0°S 171.3°W off Canton I. on 14 Jun 87.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*. WW reported several in the approaches to the Red Sea at 14.0°N 42.8°E on 12 Jul 87 and 12.3°N 46.7°E next day, and BG 30 at 25.6°N 52.6°E in the Gulf on 3 Aug 87. DMS saw one off Sabah on 9 Apr and occasional birds well out to sea off Sarawak on 6 Sep 87.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*. There are some 26 reports of up to 200 from the western Indian Ocean between 15.1°N 42.0°E on 18 Sep 87 (BG), 11.4°N 70.8°E on 1 Oct 87, and 29.0°S 46.8°E on 23 Dec (ARL), with most around the Maldivian and Mascarene islands. There is a report of 100 at 3.3°N 100.2°E in the Malacca Strait on 17 Nov 86 (KS), and twelve reports of up to 80 from between 12.0°S 121.8°E (ARL) and 1.6°N 138.5°E (KS) in the vicinity of the Banda Sea. There is one report from the NW Pacific of many seen at 24.9°N 122.5°E while passing Senkaku-Shoto I. north of Taiwan on 21 Aug 87 (WW). There are three reports of up to 13 from between 15.3°-24.7°S at 154°E in the Coral Sea in June and July 86 (RGD), and 17 reports mainly by PN of up to 1000 from between 16.4°S 176.2°E, 8.3°N 148.9°W and 16.6°S 136.6°W in the central Pacific, with most in the vicinity of the Phoenix group.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*. WW saw a number off Port Said and along the Suez Canal on 7-8 Jul 87, and some birds identified as the form *saundersi*, now usually treated as a distinct species, with a darker leading edge to the wing, which breeds around Arabia and winters around the central Indian Ocean islands, at 12.3°N 46.7°E in the Gulf of Aden on 13 Jul 87. DMS reports that birds resembling Little Terns with orange-yellow bills rather than the pale yellow seen in most parts of the world were common at Labuan, western Borneo, in July and early August 87; one seen standing at the water's edge in Victoria Harbour on 22 Sep had a white forehead and black cap, with a shaggy nape, a grey mantle, white underparts, a deeply-forked white tail, a yellow bill, and orange-red legs and feet.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*. WW saw a small group at 22.5°N 37.4°E in the central Red Sea on 10 Jul 87, some at 14.0°N 42.8°E off the southern Red Sea islands on the 12th, and off Cape Guardafui on the 14th. BG saw one at 12.6°N 45.5°E in the Gulf of Aden on 28 Jul 88 at 25.6°N 52.6°E in the northern Persian/Arabian Gulf on 3 Aug, and eight at 15.1°N 42.0°E in the southern Red Sea on 18 Sep 87. WW saw several at 24.9°N 122.5°E while passing Senkaku-Shoto I. north of Taiwan on 21 Aug 87. DMS reports that in 87 they were less common in Sarawak-Labuan waters than the Black-naped Tern in March-May but became the commonest large tern in Jun-Sep, when groups often stood on drifting logs. ARL saw one at 5.5°S 127.8°E in the Banda Sea on 3 Mar 88. RGD saw nine possibles at 1.4°N 130.7°E north of the Moluccas on 9 May 86, three at 38.7°S 141.4°E off Victoria on 2 Jun, one at 6.6°S 154.2°E off New Britain on 11th, seven at 29.3°S 153.7°E on 10 Jul and 13 at 27.7°S 153.6°E off eastern Australia 11th.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximum*. MCL noticed that 500 Royal Terns dominated 500 Laughing Gulls when landing on floating single buoy mooring hoses at Cayo Arcas (20.3°N 92.0°W) in the Gulf of Mexico on 5-7 Feb, and saw five at 9.4°N 13.7°W off Sierra Leone on 13 May 88.

Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis*. MJE saw one off Safaga at the mouth of the Gulf of Suez on 15 Mar 88, and WW birds at 18.3°N 40.1°E on 11 Jul and 14.0°N 42.8°E next day in the Red Sea and off Cape Guardafui on 14 Jul 87. CMP had an oiled bird on board at 25.0°N 54.8°E in the Gulf on 22 Aug 88, DMS saw two at sea NEW of Labuan Island, Borneo on 15 Sep 87.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*. BG saw four at 43.2°N 9.4°W off NW Spain on 27 Sep 87. In the Mediterranean WW saw birds off La Spezia on 31 Dec 86, Izmir on 25-26 Dec 86 and Port Said on 7 Jul 87, and MJE saw up to 50, many flying north, between Turkey and Suez on six days in late March 88. In the Caribbean MS saw up to 20 off Belize on 31 Aug, Mayero I. in the Grenadines on 22 Oct, and Maracaibo on 8 and 12 Dec 88.

White Tern *Gygis alba*. In 87 PN saw birds in the central Pacific at 8.2°S 176.4°W on 13 Jun, 0.4°S 156.9°W on 5 Jul and 5.8°S 162.0°W next day.

Brown or Common Noddy *Anous stolidus*. In the central Pacific PN saw several at 7.2°S 170.7°W on 27 Apr and many off Canton I. at 2.0°S 171.3°W on 24 Jun 87. In the NW Pacific WW saw several groups at 24.9°N 122.5°E off Senkaku-Shoto I. on 21 Aug 87. DMS saw one well at an offshore oil platform close to the Mantunani Is., Sabah, on 15 Jul 87, and other probables at long range off western Borneo during the following autumn. Around the East Indies ARL also saw two possibles at 9.6°S 107.1°E on 7 Feb, 17 at 0.4°N 127.0°E on 23 Feb, 10 at 0.2°S 132.1°E on 27 Feb, 15 at 0.5°N 134.4°E next day, and 25 at 7.4°S 127.6°E on 4 March 88. In the Indian Ocean he saw one at 11.4°N 70.8°E off the Laccadives on 1 Oct 87, and other unidentified noddies at 8.9°N 72.9°E on 2 Oct and 8.9°S 78.4°E on 24 Oct. WW saw many at 7.7°N 53.6°E while passing the One and a Half Degree Channel in the Maldives on 21 Jul 87, and a few at 14.0°N 42.8°E near Jabal Fugar in the approaches to the Red Sea on 12 Jul 87.

Black- or White-capped Noddy *Anous minutus*. In the W Pacific RGD some at 10.6°N 142.6°E on 6 May and 16.4°N 142.6°E on 30 Jun 86.

#### ALCIDS *ALCIDAE*

Crested Auklet *Aethia cristatella*. BG saw some 10,000-100,000 at 54.4°N 165.5°W beyond Unimac Pass on 17 Mar 88. He also found an adult male in non-breeding plumage dead on board at 53.9°N 174.0°W on the morning of 4 Jan 87.

Little Auk *Plautus alle*. MGF saw a large flock on the water at 43.3°N 53.2°E on the edge of the Newfoundland banks at 0100 on 25 Apr 87, and later found one dead on the bridge. FJA saw two in summer plumage at 55.9°N 18.0°W on 4 Apr and one in winter plumage at 55.5°N 15.1°W on 27 Apr 87. PCD saw four at the Fulmar A Platform at 56.5°N 2.1°E in the North Sea on 25 Jan and one there on 5 and 20 Mar 88. GDL saw one north of Shetland and huge rafts when crossing the Arctic Circle north of Iceland in late April 88.

Razorbill *Alca torda*. PWJ saw one at 37.3°N 11.2°E off Tunisia on 18 Mar 87, and FJA one at 51.6°N 10.9°W south of Ireland on 26 Apr 87.

Brunnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia*. BG saw ca 10,000 at 54.4°N 165.5°W near Unimac Pass on 17 Mar 88. GDL saw 17 in the East Greenland pack-ice and many along its edge in late April 88.

Horned Puffin *Fratercula corniculata*. JG saw four at 53.5°N 178.3°E off the Aleutians on 13 Aug 87.

Tufted Puffin *Lunda cirrhata*. PN saw many at 46.7°N 128.8°W off the Strait of Juan de Fuca on 23 Jun 87, several at 45.2°N 124.9°W two days later, and JG two at 53.5°N 178.3°E on 13 Aug 87.

Dr. W. R. P. Bourne, Department of Zoology, Aberdeen University, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen AB9 2TN, Scotland.

## THE ROYAL TOUR OF THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

By Lieutenant R.J.M. Williamson, Royal Navy.

On 13 February 1988, H.M. Yacht *Britannia*, in company with R.F.A. *Grey Rover*, anchored in Academy Bay, off Isla Santa Cruz in the Galapagos Islands. Embarked in the Yacht was his Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, Patron of the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society and President of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Also on board was Lord Buxton who, as Chairman of Anglia Television, had been much involved in that company's series about the Islands.

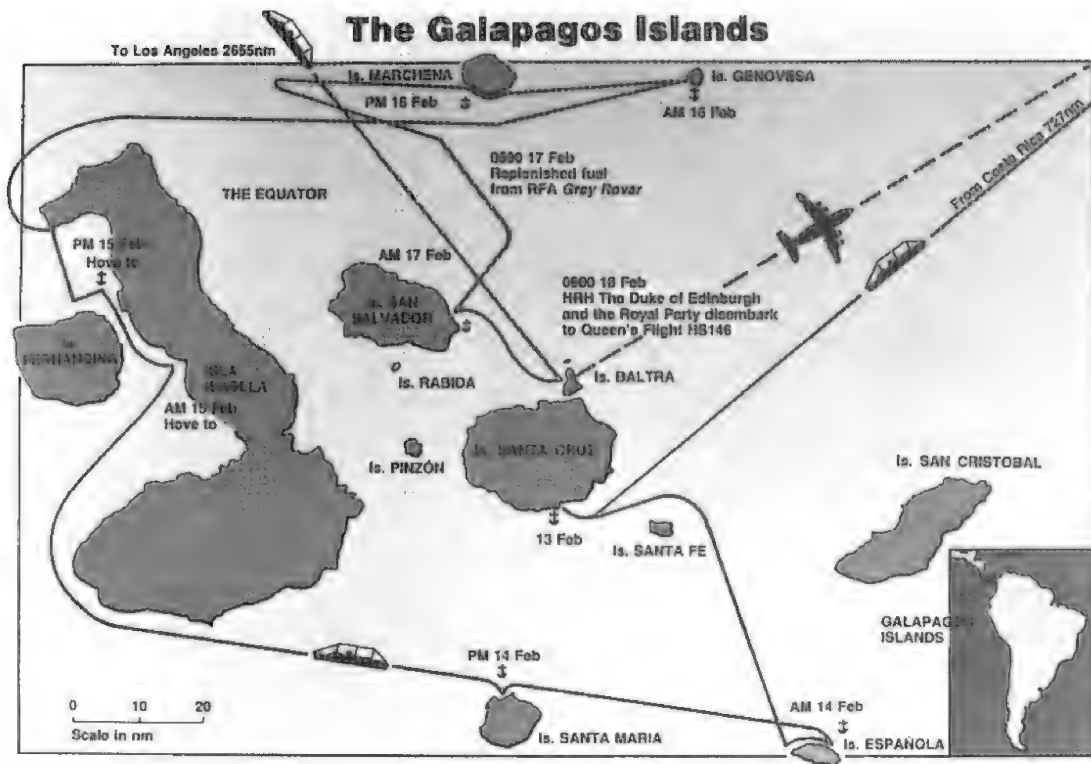
The Galapagos Islands may be considered mere specks of land in a vast expanse of seas, the Pacific Ocean. They are dwarfed by the South American continent, yet these islands are a unique entity related to no other part of this planet. Plants, animals and birds have evolved into unique forms; some have survived, scarcely changed from prehistoric times.

HRH The Duke of Edinburgh had been travelling in Costa Rica in his capacity as the President WWF, before embarking in the Royal Yacht in Puerto Caldera, a new port on Costa Rica's Pacific coast. A three day passage via Cocos Island brought the Yacht to the Galapagos Islands.

During that first day the Royal Party went ashore to the Darwin Research Station to observe the work that is being carried out to preserve and study the wildlife. The importance attached to Prince Philip's visit and interest in the unique ecology was underlined by the presence of the Vice President of Ecuador who accepted, on behalf of the Research station, some computer and communications equipment donated by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and transported from the UK in *Britannia*.

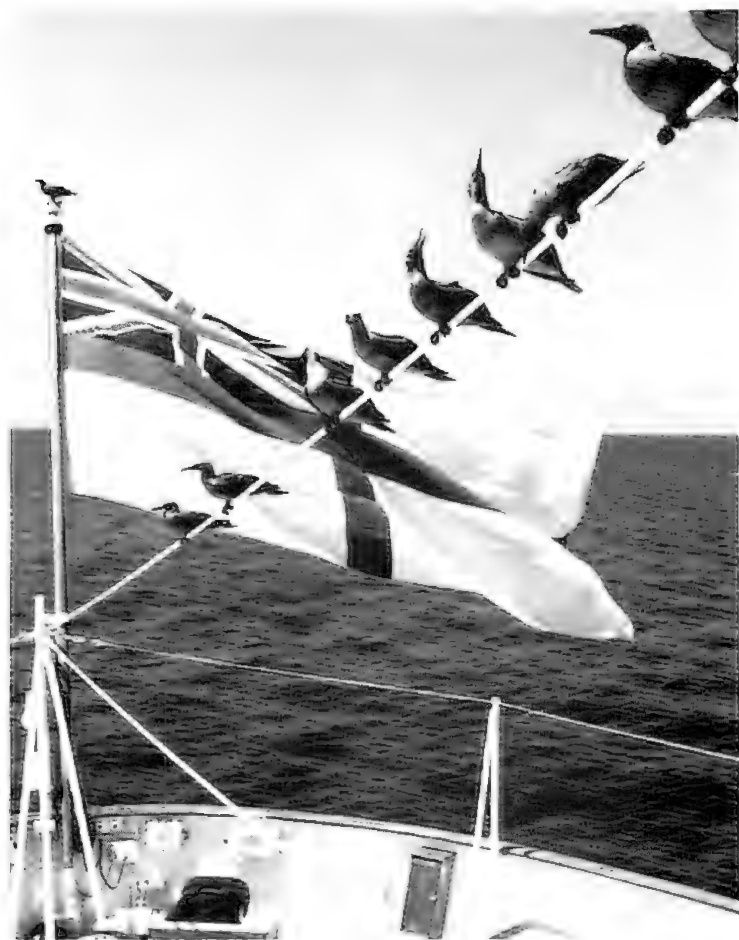
The total absence of roads and airstrips on most of the islands means water transport is the only practicable method of seeing the wildlife. The Royal Yacht moved from island to island, fitting in short stops at as many as could easily be achieved. Isla Espanola provided the Yacht's company with the first opportunity to go ashore. It was an honour and privilege to observe at first hand birds which are 'wild' but strikingly tame, and have never learned to be afraid of *Homo sapiens*. Armed with cameras, sunscreen, and the particularly useful book *A Field Guide to the Birds of Galapagos* by Michael Harris, and under the watchful eye of Godfrey Merlin, a British scientist and our guide, we were let loose on the beaches. Darwin's finches, the all-black Lava Gulls *Larus fuliginosus* and the Swallow-tailed Gull *Larus furcatus* were all observed on the foreshore amongst hundreds of bright orange Sally Lightfoot crabs.

That afternoon the Yacht came to anchor in Post Office Bay, off Isla Santa Maria (nowadays normally called Floreana); the bay is so called after a postbox similar to those found on Dartmoor. Wildlife was scarce, but there were plenty of interesting volcanic features, including a lava tunnel.



## The Royal Route

The island of Isabela, the largest in the Galapagos archipelago, provided the back-drop of what at first appeared to be a moonscape, devoid of life. The foggy day revealed a rugged landscape behind, with Marine Iguanas adorning the beach like forgotten prehistoric monsters. On the beach could be seen the extraordinary relationship between animal and birds; the iguanas would sometimes extend their legs stiffly to allow finches and mockingbirds better access to their backs, to clean them of blood-filled ticks. After several rapid flaps and a long glide, an unmistakable Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* alighted on the Royal Bridge. The bird attracted a large audience, and with the *Sea Swallow*



Brown Boobies aboard the Royal Yacht, *Britannia*, Galapagos

Photo: Ldg. Airman (Phot.) M. V. Wellings, RN





Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*, Galapagos

Photo: Steward A. K. Raby, RN

Photographic Competition in mind, the author spurred everyone on to ensure the pelican became the most photographed bird on the islands. An immature bird, after hissing and clapping its bill, it departed on a graceful glide-path.

It was soon time to move on, and just before sunset, the Royal Yacht broke through the fog bank to pass close off Punta Vicente Roca and its 2000 metres high sea cliffs. Here there were several colonies of Blue-footed Boobies *Sula nebouxii* and some Magnificent Frigatebirds *Fregata magnificens*.

Next day, Isla Genovesa (Tower Island) provided the most interesting bird observations, and numerous photographs were taken whilst at anchor off the flooded volcanic crater. It is understood that the term 'Booby' is applied to certain species because of their apparent stupidity when on the ground. This was most definitely the case with these birds; the majority of Brown Boobies chose to alight on the mast and rigging, and others tried to alight on the taffrail surrounding the foc's'le; because of the turbulent wind many were caught in the downdraught and

crashlanded onto the teak deck. Several Yachtsmen, with strong wrists and equally strong nerves, had to lift the squawking and snapping birds and 'throw' them over the side, only to see them making a further attempt at landing aboard. The beaches around the crater were crowded with colonies of assorted seabirds; several species of boobies and frigatebirds, could be found nesting side-by-side, along with the smaller Darwin's finches. All the birds were busily going about their duties of protecting and rearing their precious offspring. The sharks in the shallows deterred us from swimming!

The following day, after a navigational fright, when a 'rock' sighted near the intended anchor position turned out to be two turtles mating, the Royal Yacht anchored off San Salvador (normally called Santiago) in Sullivan Bay. Here was another popular beach, by virtue of the unique lava features, and including the much-photographed Pinnacle Rock. Galapagos Penguins *Spheniscus mendiculus* are the easiest birds in the islands to identify, and four of them joined the Royal Yachtsmen in a fast moving and amusing swimming competition off the beach. Needless to say, the penguins could not be outmanoeuvred.

The five day Royal Tour around the Galapagos Islands ended when the Royal Party disembarked to The Queen's Flight aircraft on the airfield at Baltra. HMY *Britannia* turned north for Los Angeles, having completed a fascinating and most successful period of Royal Duty. The chance to serve on board the Royal Yacht is a privilege in itself, but the time was doubly special for the unique chance to visit the fabulous archipelago and observe at first hand a fragile ecosystem, where survival of the fittest is everything.

Lieutenant R.J.M. Williamson, Royal Navy, H.M.S. *Gloucester*, c/o BFPO Ships, London.

## LANDBIRDS FROM SHIPS AT SEA

Analysis by Commander M.B. Casement, O.B.E. Royal Navy

The following landbird report sheets (numbers shown in brackets) were received during the last year. Extracts are shown in the appropriate geographical sections using the observer's initials:

- MEM(1) A.P. Benson RN, HMS *Sheffield*, Oct-Nov '88 - E. Atlantic (3);  
 Dr. W.R.P. Bourne - four pages of notes from RFA *Tidespring*, 22 Oct '87-3 Mar '88 - Med, Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and return; 3 Aug-27 Oct '88 Gulf of Oman, Med, E. Atlantic and North Sea;  
 Captain P.C. Dyer MN, MV *Shetland Service*, Nov '87 and Jan-May '88 - North Sea (Fulmar oilfield) (5+4 BEH forms);  
 Surgeon Lt. R.P.S. Gent RN, HMS *Fawn*, 27 Sep '88 - W. Atlantic (1);  
 Mr B. Grandin Sw. MN, MV *Falstaff*, Feb-May '88 - Portland (Oregon, USA) to Japan and return to Sweden via Indian Ocean, Red Sea and Med. (4);  
 Captain J.W. Gurlton MN, MV *Petersfield*, Feb '88 - NE Pacific (1);  
 Captain M.G.T. Harris RN, HMS *Ark Royal*, Aug-Nov '88 - S. China Sea, Indian Ocean (4+ BEH form and photos);  
 Chief Petty Officer MEA(M) W. Harris RN, HMS *Avenger* - Oct '88, E. Atlantic (1);  
 Chief Officer P.W. Jackson MN, MV *City of Plymouth*, April-May '88 - E. Atlantic and Med. (2);  
 Lieut. G.D. Lewis RN, HMS *Hecla*, Apr '88 - Norwegian Sea and N. Atlantic;  
 Chief Officer M.C. Littlewood MN, MT *London Spirit* - Feb-May '88 - Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, Atlantic and Med; 8 Nov-1 Dec Gulf of Mexico (8+3 BEH forms and photos);  
 Chief Officer A.R. Louch MN, RRS *Charles Darwin*, May '88 - SW Pacific; RRS *Discovery*, Aug-Sept 1988 - NE Atlantic; and RRS *Challenger*, Dec '88 - North Sea (4+ BEH form);  
 Captain S.D. Mayl MN, RRS *Charles Darwin*, Apr-May '88 - Indian Ocean, Pacific;  
 Operator W.J. Roberts MN, MV *Texaco Westminster* - Apr-May '88 - UK to Canada and return; May-Oct '88 North Sea and English Channel (7 + photos);  
 Signalmen M. Stannard RFA, RFA *Oakleaf*, Aug-Oct '88 - Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico (9 pages of notes);  
 Chief Officer R.J. Tucker MN, MV *Aet 5*, Aug '88 - Caribbean (2);  
 Chief Officer M.G. Weir MN, MV *Cannar Ambassador*, Apr-May '88 - North Sea, Atlantic (2);  
 Captain R.L. Westwater MN, MV *Barrydale*, May '88 - W. Atlantic (1 + numerous photos Atlantic, Med. and Red Sea);

Also included are a number of interesting extracts from ship's Meteorological Logs, thanks to Captain M.L.M. (Mike) Coombs of the Met. Office, Bracknell, and Captain Peter Chilman who handles the seabird records from this valuable source; these are indicated by the notation (Met).

The analysis is presented in the same geographical sections A to J as in past years. The general pattern of events reported, and the species involved, are similar to previous years, in particular in the Atlantic (Sections A and B), and in the Mediterranean (Section E) for which areas much data has now been accumulated, but closer examination will show a number of unusual species not identified or reported before in *Sea Swallow*, for example the two separate records of Cretzschmar's Bunting (Section E). Observers are therefore exhorted to look more critically at all unfamiliar sightings, and to include accurate descriptions, sketches and photographs with their reports of anything unusual. Even the most unlikely species can turn up at sea during migration times, and frequently do, but strong evidence is needed before they can be accepted in these pages.



Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (northern race),  
North Atlantic, April 1988

Photo: Operator W. J. Roberts, MN

The record of radar contacts (Section E) is also of high interest to me, and may encourage others to look more closely at their radar sets. The truth is that bird echoes are observable on many radars, especially the less modern sets, if one knows what to look for, but the problem is to convince others that they are indeed birds! Much time and patience is required, but I would welcome more reports from sea, and would gladly give advice if members would write to me.

#### SECTION A - EAST ATLANTIC (EAST OF 30°W), BAY OF BISCAY and IBERIAN

1988

On 18 Apr MGW saw the following in position 48.8°N 21.5°W, 550nm SW Ireland: Seven Redshank *Tringa totanus* and a Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* arrived together and remained one hour. Five more Golden Plovers arrived later and stayed 45 mins, and three Dunlin *Calidris alpina* circled briefly. A single Scaup *Aythya marila* circled twice before heading north. The wind was SSE/5.

On 20-22 Apr WJR photographed four Golden Plovers (northern form) and a Redshank aboard in position 47.9°N 26.8°W, 720nm SW Ireland and 540nm north of the Azores. They were exhausted, little or no food offered was taken and two plovers died 22nd. The survivors departed north; wind was SW/6-7.

On 26 Apr BG saw 26 Curlew/Whimbrel *Numenius* sp. flying NE when 60nm NW Morocco (36.5°N 07.6°W) and two more on 27 Apr when 30nm west of Vigo, Portugal.

On 7 May MGW noted a Swallow *Hirundo rustica* circling for 10 mins before settling for 2 hrs in position 49.2°N 12.5°W, 180nm SW Cape Clear I., Ireland. On 18 May three Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* were aboard for 13 hrs at 50.5°N 14.6°W, 180nm WSW Ireland.



Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (southern race).  
North Atlantic, April 1988

Photo: W. J. Roberts, MN

On 7 May MCL saw two Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* close offshore St. Vincent, Cape Verde Is.

On 14 May PWJ saw a Whimbrel *N. phaeopus* land aboard when 100nm west of Ushant, 48.5°N 07.6°W.

On 16 May a Curlew/Whimbrel was aboard MV *Forthbank* (Met) in position 46°.4N 12.9°W, 240nm NW Cape Finisterre; it probably arrived during the night in thick fog.

MCL noted a House Martin *Delichon urbica* circling on 27 May when 56nm west of Cape St. Vincent (35.1°N 12.1°W) and another on 28th, also a Swift *Apus apus* heading NE, when 92nm from Madeira (34.3°N 17.9°W).

On 6 Aug WJR saw at a distance of 0.5nm a White-tailed Eagle *Haliaetus albicilla* close east of South Uist, Hebrides, heading east towards the mainland. During the period 10-13 Aug he saw the following species just west of Shetland: Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, four Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, 8-9 Turnstones *Arenaria interpres*, six Redshank, and a Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*.

On 27 Aug ARL recorded a Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* 27.1°N 20.8°W, 150nm WSW Canary Is., and on 9 Sep a probable Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* was seen briefly 625nm SW Madeira, 27.9°N 27.7°W. On 11 Sep a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* was aboard for two hours in position 29.5°N 24.8°W, 360nm west of the Canary Is.

On 13 Sep a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* was noted by MV West Moor (Met) in position 14.7°N 17.8°W, 30nm west of Cape Verde, Senegal.

On 23 Sep WRPB saw two *alba* wagtails flying south at 58.0°N 5.9°W, 20nm north of Lewis, and at 1140 22 probable Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* east of North Rona (59.1°N 05.5°W) heading south at 150m.

On 24 Sep MV *British Reliance* (Met) reported a probable Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* 100nm SW Bijagos archipelago, 10.2°N 18.0°W, which circled the ship 3-4 times before departing NE.

On 25 Sep WRPB had a Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* at ca 65.5°N 05.0°E, 130nm NW Norwegian coast, and on 26th, when 75nm SW Lofotens (ca 67°N 10°E), a male and female Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, two Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* and two Snow Buntings. On 27 Sep a Whimbrel was seen flying SW at ca 64°N 01°E, 140nm NW coast of Norway.



Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* (male).

Bay of Biscay, October 1988

Photo: Captain R. L. Westwater, MN

Migrants recorded aboard by WH on 30 Sep included a male Blackcap in position 51.8°N 05.8°W, 10nm west of Skomer I., which remained until 1 Oct on arrival Faslane, a Redwing *Turdus iliacus* 100nm NW St. Kilda on 13 Oct, and a Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* on 14 Oct in position 58.7°N 11°W, 90nm NW St. Kilda. In the same area he noted another male Blackcap on 17 Oct, and a Blackbird *T. merula* (M) on 18th; the winds during this period were generally north and easterly, and it is interesting to compare these observations with those from OWS *Cumulus* (see page\*\*).

On 12 Oct a probable Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* was recorded by MV *West Moor* (Met) 41.9°N 10.4°W, 75nm SW Cape Finisterre. It was seen to catch two birds in flight. Another Peregrine was photographed aboard MV *Hemina* (Met) on 14 Oct in position 47.2°N 06.9°W, 100nm SW Ushant. It remained several hours and ate at least two small birds including a probable thrush *turdus* sp.

On 16 Oct APB recorded the following on board at 38.4°N 12.3°W, 130nm west of Lisbon: Meadow Pipit *A. pratensis* (5), Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* (2), a Turtle Dove, and an *alba* Wagtail.

At 0930 on 17 Oct MV *West Moor* (Met) reported a probable Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* in position 20.8°N 17.9°W, and at 1230 a probable Spotted Eagle-owl *Bubo africanus* was aboard for 30 mins in position 20°N 17.8°W, 70nm SW Cape Blanco, before flying off SE. On 18th a Whimbrel circled the ship in position 15.9°N 17.8°W, 65nm NNW Cape Verde, Senegal; its distinctive call was heard. Also seen aboard were a number of unidentified warblers. On 19th, when 120nm SW Bijouga Is. Senegal, a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* was sighted.

RLW photographed a male Brambling aboard in the Bay of Biscay on 18 Oct.

On 1 Nov, when 100nm west of Cape Finisterre (37.7°N 11.3°W), APB saw Skylark *Alauda arvensis* (2), Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (1M+1F), a Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, a Blackcap (M), and a possible Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans*; the wind was SE/3-4. During the forenoon of 14 Oct, when in the Bay of Biscay, 130nm SW Ushant (47.5°N 07.7°W) a spectacular "fall" of migrants included 100+ Robins *Eritacus rubecula* (mostly juv.), Skylark (18 passed overhead heading SE), Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (2), Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* (2), Blackcap and singles of Wheatear, Meadow Pipit, Dunlin *Calidris alpina* and a *flava* Wagtail; the wind was SW/3-4, and most birds arrived from the north, and settled briefly aboard before heading SE. Further sightings pm included Pied Wagtail *M. alba* (3), Grey Wagtail *M. cinerea*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* (3), Blackcap (1M+1F), and several small groups of Skylarks passing

overhead. On 15th, when 120nm west of Cape Finisterre the SE passage of migrants continued with Blackcap (3), White Wagtail, Song Thrush (2), Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (2), Grey Wagtail, Dunlin (4), Skylark (3), Redstart *P. phoenicurus*, Garden Warbler and two Chiffchaff *P. collybita*.

On 4 Nov a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* came aboard MV *Horncliff* (Met), hove to in heavy weather in position 42.3°N 23.2°W, 300nm NW Azores: winds were NNE/45 kts. When the vessel resumed a SW course the owl left the ship, presumably in search of land, or another ship.

In November (date not given) a Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* was photographed by Third Officer D. Harnett aboard CC *Cable Venture* (Met) in position 100nm SW Cape Clear, Ireland.

On 11 Dec two Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* were photographed aboard MV *Rimula* (Met) in position 09.0°N 16.0°W, 120nm SW Guinea.

## SECTION B - ENGLISH CHANNEL, NORTH SEA AND BALTIC

1987

In an extract from his ship's newsletter (MV *Texaco Westminster* trading between Flotta, Orkneys and Europe), WJR describes September and October in the North Sea as a "flurry of feathers...as activity with Autumn migration is under way. The period 20-21 Sep was excellent from our point of view but alas not for the birds. During our stay at Wilhelmshaven the weather was hot and sultry, and this had attracted great swarms of black flies on board the ship. This in turn attracted a host of insect-eating birds.

"The list recorded on passage to Flotta, was as follows: Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (1M+1F), Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (1M+1F), Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*, Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, 15-20 pips *Anthus* sp., a flock of 12 Sanderling *Calidris alba* and two birds of prey. The birds of prey could not be conclusively identified, but might have been Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* or Merlins *Falco columbarius*. Unfortunately for the smaller birds, these two completely destroyed them. The main deck was like a battlefield and the predators used the ship's fixtures as feeding tables. The Whitethroat took up residence inside the wheelhouse and promptly fell asleep. The unfortunate Swallow was going the wrong way so the 2nd Mate corrected his charts, adjusted his gyro and sent him on his way! A crew member said the Robin was in his cabin getting stuck into his Busy Lizzie!

"The voyage from Flotta to Rotterdam was not so dramatic, and all we could muster were Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus*, and a Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*. The return trip was a little better and we had some Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos* and Redwings *T. iliacus* from Scandinavia heading for their winter quarters in the UK, also a Robin, Blackcap (M), Redstart *P. phoenicurus* (M), and a Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*".

PCD reported the following late migrants in Fulmar oilfield (56.5°N 02.1°E):

14 Nov. Four Jackdaws *Corvus monedula*, (dep. SW) and a Hooded Crow *C. corone*.

27 Nov. A Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* and a male Blackbird *Turdus merula*.

1988

PCD recorded the following from Fulmar oilfield:

13 Jan. Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* close by in water.

18 Mar. Blackbird (2), Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (flock of 13 circled several mins and dep. S, plus one on deck). Wind was SSE/6.

25 Mar. Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* 12 circled am. one aboard. Wind was SW/8.

2 May. One Curlew *Numenius arquata* flying west in fog, and an Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* on deck.

3 May. A Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* and a probable Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*.

4 May. Swallow (four circling).

5 May. An adult (F) Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* circled several times and finally alighted on bridge wing where it was viewed from distance of 2ft. It departed towards oil platform. A Willow Warbler arrived aboard, but was found dead next day.

6 May. Seen aboard were Willow Warbler (1), Swallow (4), and House Martin *Delichon urbica* (1). An unidentified Scoter *Melanitta* sp. was seen heading E.

13 May. Six Swallows and a Swift *Apus apus* landed briefly. Wind was E/6.

14 May. House Martin (1), Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (1M), Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (1M) and a Redstart (1F) aboard. Wind E/4-5.

15 May. A drake Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* seen swimming close to the ship.

On 28 Apr BG saw a Swallow when 45nm north of France (49.7°N 03.1°W), and on 29th, when 10nm west of Texel (53.1°N 04.5°E) a Swift, two pipits *Anthus* sp., a *Phylloscopus* warbler and a Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*. At 2000, when 25 nm west of Esbjerg, Denmark he saw a female Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*.

In the Baltic, BG saw the following species am, on 1 May in position 56.1°N 16.8°E, 30nm SE Karlskrona: a female Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, ten Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*, two Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* a Wood Pigeon, and three Bramblings flying NE; a further five Bramblings were seen at 2000 when 75nm SE Stockholm.

Whilst heading NW off the Danish coast WJR reported the following during the period 13-15 May: a Pied Flycatcher (F), two probable Wood Warblers, a Whitethroat, a Wood Pigeon, and a Collared Dove *Streptopelia decucocto*.

During the period 3-25 Oct WRPB saw the following in the Portland areas: 22 Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* on 3 Oct (10 heading SE, 6 heading N) and 18 Oct (1), a possible Jack Snipe *Limnocyrtus minima* passed heading west 5nm SSE Portland Bill and a Blackcap (F) was aboard on 12 Oct; Black Redstart on 18 Oct (1F) and 20 Oct (2), also a Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* a Robin and a Song Thrush; a Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* heading SW on 19th when 7nm south of Portland, and two heading SW on 20th; Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* on 12th (several heading south am, and one heading north pm), 20th (one NW), 25th (one S); four Linnets flying south on 21st.

On 2 Jul in the Humber Estuary, WJR caught and photographed a Buzzard *Buteo borealis* in an exhausted state. It had appeared overnight and flew off towards Spurn Head.

On 26 Oct WRPB saw a Redwing heading south 30nm SW St. Catherine's Point, Isle of Wight.

During the period 11-13 Oct WJR saw the following off Flamborough Head: Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* (2), Wood Pigeon, Blackbird (1M), Meadow Pipit (2), Song Thrush (15), Starling (12); winds were SE/8-9 and most remained until the ship berthed at Rotterdam. Other species noted during this passage were Redstart (F) and two *Phylloscopus* warblers on 14th, a Wren *T. troglodytes*, two Robins, a Black Redstart (F), arriving during the night 15/16th, a Pied Flycatcher (F), a Chaffinch (F), Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* (M), six Goldcrests, a Firecrest (M), Siskin *Carduelis spinus*, Meadow Pipit, two Blackbird (M), Fieldfare *T. pilaris* and 20-30 Redwings. Off the Firth of Forth on 19th, a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* and Blackcap (1M + 1F) rested aboard briefly, and whilst at anchor 19-22nd in the Firth of Forth, a Brambling, four Tree Pipits *A. trivialis*, a Goldcrest, and a Redstart were aboard. A Curlew remained for 24 hrs during fog. Two juv. Sparrowhawks and two Bramblings were seen heading SE when off the German Bight 23-24 Oct.

In the vicinity of Fulmar oilfield, PCD reported fog and poor visibility 17-18 Oct with winds SSE/4-6. Several birds died on board and were examined (BEH forms) including a male Brambling (winter plumage) and Goldcrest, also a Redwing in a reasonably good condition which was kept in a box and fed for a day, but on being released fell into the sea after a short flight.

On 30 Oct ARL saw a skein of 22 probable Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* flying SW in position 52.6°N 03.7°E, 35nm W. Ijmuiden, and on 2 Nov, in a similar position, three probable Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*.

MV *Nordic Link* (Met) recorded on 30 Oct a Barn Owl *Tyto alba* flying west 3ft above the sea surface in position 53.0°N 04.1°E - 25nm off Texel.

Off the Yorkshire coast, a Fieldfare attempted to land aboard in a SW gale on 8 Nov in position 55.5°N 01.0°E, 70nm NE Whitby, and a large flock (c100) of Starlings similarly attempted to land when 15nm SE Farne Is, on 9 Nov, together with several Fieldfares and other smaller thrushes, possibly Redwings. On 10th, when 40nm east of the Tyne, species included Chaffinch, Starling and a Blackbird (ARL).

On 2 Dec a Barn Owl was aboard MV *Matco Clyde* (Met) at 59.7°N 01.6°E, NE of Beryl Oilfield, 100nm SW Norway.

ARL reported a Common Scoter (F) circling the ship on 10 Dec when 70nm west of Denmark, 55.5°N 06.0°E.





Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, mid-Atlantic, October 1987

Photo: Captain R. L. Westwater, MN

#### SECTION C - WEST ATLANTIC (WEST OF 30°)

1987

At 1255 on 22 Oct a "Sea Kestrel" was noted by MV *Golden Fleece* (Met), in position 23.3°N 31.5°W - 750nm west of Cape Blanco and 450nm from the nearest land (Cape Verde Is.). There must also have been some small birds, from the feathers noted on deck. It was still around on 23rd, but there was no sign of it on 25th. No description was given, but a Merlin *Falco columbarius* seems the most likely. (MBC).

On 28 Oct WJR (pers comm) recorded a Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* aboard MV *Texaco Westminster*, en route from Sullom Voe to Marcus Hook, off the Newfoundland coast near the Cabot Strait. On the return trip a Long-billed Dowitcher *Lymnodromus scolopaceus* was seen aboard briefly (no further details given).

1988

On 1 Apr a probable female Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* landed aboard MV *Lincolnshire* (Met) in position 36.3°N 36.6°W, 380nm west of the Azores.

On 19 Apr MCL experienced heavy rain and SW winds force 7 am increasing to W/10 pm, when an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* came aboard at 0900 in position 33.9°N 75.9°W, 90nm SE Cape Hatteras. A Chuck-will's-widow *Caprimulgus carolinensis* and a Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* were seen at 1930 when 130nm SW Cape Fear. Next day the wind was NE/4 and species aboard included Green Heron *Butorides striatus* (2), Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon* (1M+1F), Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis* and a Painted Bunting *Passerinus ciris*. On 22 Apr five Cattle Egrets, in breeding plumage, and an Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus* were aboard in position 27.9°N 86.3°W, 100nm SW Mississippi Delta. Cattle Egrets (1+6) and a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* were seen in a similar position on 22nd.



Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus novaboracensis*, West Atlantic

*Photo:* Captain R. L. Westwater, MN



Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* West Atlantic

*Photo:* Captain R. L. Westwater, MN

WJR reported two Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* (southern race) and a Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* which arrived on 21 Apr at 47.3°N 33.3°W, 600nm NNW Azores; they remained for 24 hrs and departed north on 22nd.

On 1 May MGW reported two Sharp-shinned Hawks *Accipiter striatus* (1M + 1F) 40nm ESE Cape Gaspe, Gulf of St. Lawrence. Also aboard were 6-8 Savannah Sparrows *Passerculus sandwichensis*, but overnight two of these were eaten by the hawks.

On 12 May RLW photographed a Merlin 12nm S. Delaware, and a Northern Parula Warbler *Parula americana* 40nm E. Cape May (38.5°N 73.5°W). On 13 May he photographed a male American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* 150nm SE Cape Fear, and on 19th a Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* 19nm NE Jupiter inlet. An Osprey landed on the foremast on 19th in position 29.3°N 78.6°W, 100nm NE Cape Canaveral, and left at dawn next day. A Belted Kingfisher (F) was aboard briefly on 21 May when 50nm SW Cape May, and a Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis* was photographed on 29 May when 27nm NNE Cape Canaveral.

On 15 Aug ARL examined (BEH form) a probable Little Stint *Calidris minutus* in position 29.2°N 44.9°W, 1200nm ENE Barbados, and on 7 Sep an Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* circled the ship 5 mins in position 25.7°N 31.0°W, 620nm NW Cape Verde Is.

On 27 Sep RPSG photographed a Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* aboard in position 22.8°N 48.5°W, 1000nm SE Bermuda; it was thought this had probably blown off course by Hurricane *Helene*, centred 250-300 miles away.

On 10 Oct an Osprey settled aboard MV *B.P. Energy* (Met) in position 41.0°N 51.0°W, 360nm SE Cape Race, Newfoundland.

On 10 Oct MS recorded a Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* briefly aboard in position 11.8°N 58.9°W, 110nm east of Trinidad. On 11th three Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* flew across the ship from the west at 09.3°N 55.6°W, 200nm east of Surinam.

On 26 Oct a large owl, possibly a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* landed aboard MV *Pacific Crane* (Met) in position 42.5°N 33.8°W, 200nm north of Corvo, Azores.

On 14 Dec MCL reported a Kildeer *Charadrius vociferus* aboard briefly at 0800 in position 28.1°N 64.4°W, 330nm SSE Bermuda. Wind was WSW/6 later becoming NW/9 which lasted two days.

## SECTION D - GULF OF MEXICO AND CARIBBEAN

1988

On 4 Feb MCL had two Great Egrets *Casmerodius albus* aboard overnight, and a Tree Swallow *Iridoprocne bicolor* 130nm east of Mexico, 27.0°N 94.3°W, and, later, two Bronzed Cowbirds *Molothrus aeneus*.

On 28 Feb BG reported a Brown-headed Cowbird *M. ater* in position 27.0°N 91.4°W, 90nm NW Yucatan peninsula, Mexico.

MCL had a Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia* aboard briefly on 12 Mar at 20.1°N 83.9°W, 105nm SSE Cuba, and a Green Heron *Butorides striatus* at 20.6°N 84.9°W. A Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* came aboard briefly on 14th 190nm SSW Mississippi Delta, 29.9°N 89.9°W. A Kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis* was seen on 28 Apr when 18nm north of Cuba (21.6°N 76.4°W), and a Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* on 29th, 15nm north of Haiti (20.6°N 70.5°W).

An Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* landed on the foremast pm on 12 Aug (RJT) in position 10.6°N 79.3°W, 63nm NNE Panama. It remained until first light on 13th.

During the period 24-28 Aug the weather was dominated by a tropical depression which moved NE from Puerto Rico on 25th, off Haiti on 26th, and north of Cuba moving NE to Florida on 27th. On passage from Miami (on 24th) to Belize, via the Yucatan Channel, MS saw 20+ Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* heading south on 24 Aug, and 22 more on 25th when 50nm west of Cuba, also a juv. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* which remained until next day. An Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus* landed briefly on 26th (noon position 20.5°N 85.9°W). A Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon* was aboard 30 mins on 27th when 63nm east of Cape Catoche, Mexico, and a Cattle Egret circled the ship but did not land. Two more Cattle Egrets circled twice when 68nm SW Cuba on 29th.

On 27 Aug a small warbler, probably a female Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* was aboard SS *Lima* (Met) in position 16.1°N 78.1°W, 100nm SW Jamaica.

MS saw four Rough-winged Swallows *Stelgidopteryx serripennis* fly over the ship heading west on 30 Aug when 100nm east of Belize - 18.0°N 85.7°W. A Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus* was seen perched on a spar off Belize on 31 Aug.

MS saw eight Barn Swallows flying south on 3 Sep close east of Belize, and 14 heading SW on 6 Sep when 200nm SE Jamaica - 14.8°N 74.9°W. 15 Barn Swallows landed aboard pm. on 13 Sep, also a Cattle Egret when 160nm south of Haiti; all disappeared next day. At least 20 more Swallows and a White-eyed Thrush *Turdus jamaicensis* were aboard on 14th when 40nm WNW Jamaica. The prevailing winds during this period were SE/5-7, weather overcast with rain.

On 19 Sep MS recorded a female American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* and a Black-and-white Warbler when 35 nm south of Jamaica. On 20th, when 65nm south of Cuba, an adult Cattle Egret was aboard all day, and a Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* rested briefly. A Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla* was aboard throughout 21st when 150nm SW Florida - 24.9°N 84.1°W.

On 3 Nov MV *Barrydale* (Met) reported a probable Merlin *Falco columbarius* (juv) which circled several times and then landed on the crane jib in position 12.5°N 75.8°W, 300nm SSW Jamaica. It remained until well after dark.

On 11 Nov MV *Horncliff* (Met) reported an American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* when 70nm SSE Jamaica (14.2°N 75.1°W). It disappeared during the night.

MCL recorded the following on passage from St. Croix to Columbia 14-15 Nov: Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia* at 0650 on 14th at 14.8°N 69.6°W (128nm north of Aruba, Columbia) and two more at 1730 when 13.0°N 72.3°W which settled and remained till 15th; a Great Egret circled for two hours on 14th; a Barn Swallow arrived at 1730, 52nm NW Pta Gallinas, Columbia, and remained till 15th.

27/28 Nov MCL witnessed a passage of probable Tree Swallows *Tachycineta bicolor* (or possibly Violet-green Swallows *T. thalassina*) arriving from NE when 6nm off Coatzacoalcas breakwater, Mexico. A few were seen pm on 27th, but throughout 28th groups of about 10 flew past heading SW at approx 5 minute intervals. None were seen 30th. The visibility out to sea was generally good, with winds southerly force 3, but during the night of 28th winds became N'ly 6/7, overcast with heavy rain. The nearest landmass to NE was Florida 950nm.

On 1 Dec MCL reported a Tropical/Northern Parula *Parula pitiayumi/americanus* in a weak condition at 22.6°N 91.4°W - 125nm NW Mexico. It was later found dead and examined (BEH form).

## SECTION E - MEDITERRANEAN

1987

In the western Med, WRPB saw the following evidence of small-scale southward passerine migration by day close east of Gibraltar during the period 22-31 Oct: Swallow *Hirundo rustica* 22nd. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* 22nd (2), 27th (1) and 29th (1). Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* 22nd (1 juv), Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* 26th (6) and 28th (1), and probable Robins *Erithacus rubecula* on 22nd and 29th. Other unidentified passerines were seen including larks and 25 finches heading south, (but also two heading north) on 26th. A male Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* was sighted on 29th 50nm SE Cape Palos, 37.7°N 09.7°E. A probable Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* was heading south, and a small falcon was reported 15nm east of Gib. on 22nd. Several butterflies were also seen heading south during this period, including two Painted Ladies *Vanessa cardui* 22nd and two more on 28th, and three unidentified white species on 28th. At least two Robins were aboard at 37.7°N 09.7°E, 25nm N. Bizerta on 30 Oct, also a Song Thrush *T. philomelos* and another small passerine. On 31st, when 25nm south of Sicily, 36.4°N 15.0°E, a Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* was seen heading NE, and a Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* was aboard.

On 1 Nov R. Cain of HMS *York* (in WRPB), recorded a Bluethroat *Cyanosylvia svecica* in the southern Ionian Sea ca 34°N 21°E, 65nm NNW Ras el Hamama, Libya.

On 2 Nov WRPB was 90nm south of Crete (33.4°N 24.5°E) and recorded the following species: Greenfinch (M) and a Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (F), both of which remained until arrival Suez pm 3rd, Black Redstart (1M+1F), and a Robin. From dawn on 3 Nov (32.7°N 31.3°E) to Port Said at dusk, he reported the progressive arrival and then departure of at least 15 Chiffchaffs *P. collybita*, a probable Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*, one or two male Sardinian Warblers *S. melanocephala*, a male Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Robin, Song Thrush, Starling (3), White Wagtail, Chaffinch (2), Grey Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, (2), Skylark *Alauda arvensis* (3), Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* and Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis* (15).

On 17 Mar a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* settled aboard MV *Tokyo Bay* (Met) in position 37.3°N 05.1°E, 25nm north Algeria, and on 24 Apr a dozen or more *flava* wagtails were seen aboard at 33.7°N 24.9°E, 100nm north Libya. These were mostly Black-headed *M.f.feldleggi* and Grey-headed *M.f.thunbergi*.

On 8 Apr Tony Soper (pers. comm.) photographed a male Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia* which arrived on board SS *Canberra* at 1645 BST in the central Ionian Sea at ca 37°N 17°E, 60nm SE Italy. It was "enjoyably tame, ignoring the deckchair brigade as it searched for biscuit crumbs. We photographed it at 1730, it disappeared soon after, along with a couple of Tree Pipits *A. trivialis* and Lesser Whitethroats".

Also on 8 Apr PWJ recorded the following migrants in the area 33.5°N 32.0°E, 110nm north of Egypt and 80nm SW Cyprus: At 0430z White Wagtail (1), Lesser Whitethroat (4), Blackcap *S. atricapilla* (1M), Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (3); at 0600z four Cretzschmar's Buntings (3M+1F) aboard, and a probable Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedichenus* attempted to land on a container; 0830z a Blackcap (F) and a Turtle Dove *S. turtur* were aboard, and a Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* was seen fleetingly; at 0915z a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* alighted and an Orphean Warbler *S. hortensis* was seen; at 1100 a possible Water Pipit *Anthus spinolenta* was aboard. Winds during this period were NE/4.

Further migrants were seen by PWJ further west on 9 Apr including a Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanicus*, four Lesser Whitethroats, a White Wagtail and a Blackcap (M) in position 34.5°N 26.4°E, 26nm SSE Crete. In the Ionian Sea on 10 Apr two Yellow Wagtails *M.f.flava*, a White Wagtail and three Turtle Doves were seen at 35.7°N 20.0°E, and two House Martins *Delichon urbica* were aboard on 11 Apr when close SW Sicily.

On 12 Apr a Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* was seen by PWJ to land on a container when 30nm north of Tunisia, 37.5°N 07.8°E. On 17th a similar, possibly the same, bird appeared when 23nm WNW Sicily Is., 50.0°N 07.0°W. It seems possible that this had stowed away in the open-top container.

BG recorded the following migrants on 22 Apr when 90nm north of Libya, 33.0°N 27.0°E: Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* (1), Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus* (2), Spanish Sparrow (45), Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*, Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (1M) and a Turtle Dove. In the southern Ionian Sea (35.5°N 18.3°E) were two Turtle Doves and two Spanish Sparrows (1M dead + 1F injured).

Several Swallows were reported by MV *Ivy Bank* (Met) on 26 Apr in position 34.6°N 21.4°E, 100nm north Libya.



White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, Mediterranean

Photo: Captain R. L. Westwater, MN

PWJ reported four Swallows and 11 Rufous Turtle Doves *S.orientalis* on 29 Apr in the Ionian Sea, 36.0°N 20.7°E, but this species seems improbable; *S.turtur* are much more likely.

MCL recorded a Melodius Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* at dawn on 23 May 3nm north of Skikda, Algeria (36.0°N 04.0°E), catching small flying insects, and another on 25 May when 24nm NW Algeria (37.3°N 03.5°E).

On 3 Aug MV *British Ranger* (Met) recorded two Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* (1M+1F) which circled and settled aboard, where they were photographed and sketched. They disappeared at sunset. The position was 37.1°N 05.3°E - 15nm north of Algeria.

On 24 Aug WRPB saw four Grey herons *Ardea cinerea* heading SW in position 36.5°N 13.7°E, 37nm NW of Gozo, and five more flying SW off Barcelona on 1 Sep.

Off Europa Point, Gibraltar at 1700 on 2 Sep WRPB saw a single Swallow flying north, although there was a "good passage south on shore at the time". On 3 Sep a female Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* was reported on board in fog in the middle of the Strait of Gibraltar.

**RADAR ECHOES.** MV *Kowloon Bay* (Met), on passage to Port Said, recorded that from 0800-1000 on 10 October, when in position 34.4°N 22.0°E, 60nm SSW Cape Matapan, Greece, many echoes were observed on the radar over a band of more than 40 miles, which proved to be migrating birds. The echoes were clearly tracked and were heading due south at 25 kts. More than 100 separate echoes were counted during this period, and visual sightings showed small compact flocks of dark landbirds flying about 75 metres above the sea. The radar was a Kelvin Hughes 10cm set with aerial height of 40 metres. The weather was fine and clear with few clouds and wind N by E force 4.

**COMMENT.** My own radar studies in this area 1960-63 (*Ibis* 108:461-191) showed that most warblers and other small passerines migrate by night at about 5,000 ft; the fact that these were migrating by day and low over the water limits the possibilities. My guess is that they could perhaps have been Quail *Coturnix coturnix* which cross the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean from Greece to North Africa in spectacular "blizzards" at this time of the year, or they could also have been pipits and/or larks which are regular diurnal migrants, but more commonly these are observed using the shorter sea crossings from Sicily and Sardinia. M.B.C.

On 16 Oct MV *Hampshire* reported two probable Kestrels aboard 1640 until dark, chasing small birds which they devoured whilst still in flight. The position was 37.5°N 01.8°W - 75nm south of Ibiza and 65nm north of Algeria.

## SECTION F - RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN

1987

At 0700 on 5 Nov WRPB reported three Common Wheatears *O. oenanthe*, a Chiffchaff *P. collybita*, and a Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* in position 26.4°N 34.8°E, a male Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* at 1540, and a male Bluethroat *Cyanosylvia svecica* at 1710.

1988

On 18 Apr BG reported a probable Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes* flying east 60nm east of Dahlak Is. (15.5°N 41.7°E) and a Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* aboard.

MGTH photographed a Lanner Falcon *Falco naumanni* aboard HMS *Ark Royal* in the central Red Sea on 5 July, and a Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* in the Gulf of Aden on 9 July.

On 3 Sep a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* was aboard MV *Act 1* (Met) in S. Red Sea and a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (M) was aboard MV *Staffordshire* (Met) on 18 Sep in position 17.7°N 40.5°E.



Lanner Falcon *Falco hearnicus* aboard HMS Ark Royal, Red Sea

Photo: Captain M. G. T. Harris, RN

#### SECTION G - INDIAN OCEAN AND ARABIAN SEA

1987

On 20 Sep, M. Caley, (in WRPB), recorded a Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* aboard RFA *Diligence*, a dove and a small passerine in position 19.8°N 58.8°E, south of Masirah I.

On 10 Nov WRPB had a Bluethroat *Cyanosylvia svecica* aboard all day at 17.1°N 55.6°E, 25nm off Kuria Muria Is, also a Plain Nightjar *Caprimulgus inornatus* - "small sandy with pale coverts, single faint dark lines down each side crown and mantle, faint pale lines cheek and edges coverts, no markings throat, wing or tail tips, rictal bristles extending beyond bill; recorded Yemen but not Oman". A single Swallow *H. rustica* and a White Wagtail *M. alba* were seen at 18.4°N 58.1°E at 1400, and three Swallows at 19.2°N 58.6°E, at 1710.

On 17 Nov (am.) WRPB recorded a Desert Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia minula* in position 21.4°N 59.8°E, 20nm off Ras Jebsh. Seen down to 3ft: "similar to Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca*, but small, possibly slighter shorter wings and tail, fawn on mantle and without contrasting dark ear coverts". A medium-sized wader was seen resting on a plank, and a small dove was reported. A greater Stone-plover *Esacus recurvirostris* was seen circling the ship pm; "resembled *Burhinus oedipnemus* but seemed large, with longer yellow legs, and prominent white patch in centre of distal part of wing". The position was 20.3°N 59.2°E. A probable Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* was noted: "might also have been a female Red Turtle Dove *S. tranquebarica*".

On 18 Nov a large owl was reported to WRPB, which had flown around ship at 0700 "with at least 4ft wingspan": it was identified from book as an eagle owl, probably a Spotted Eagle Owl *Bubo africanus*. Later, a swallow and a hawk were reported at 17.5°N 57.7°E.

On 10 Dec MV *Craiglas* (Met) recorded a hawk *Accipiter* sp. aboard 400nm SW Nicobar Is. (02.5°N 89.6°E). Despite photographs it has not proved possible to identify the species. Winds during the previous 24 hrs were "northerly to westerly".

1988

On 13 Nov MGTH photographed and examined a small blue flycatcher, subsequently identified as a Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*, in position 10.6°N 75.5°E, 30nm WSW of Ponnani, India. It died overnight and was sent to the British Museum (Natural History), Tring.

## SECTION H - PERSIAN GULF AND GULF OF OMAN

1987

On 4 Nov M. Caley (in WRPB) reported a possible Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* on board RFA *Diligence* all day, off Wudam; it could also have been a pale Middle East race of European Nightjar *C. europaeus* (WRPB).

WRPB recorded a probable Hobby *Falco subbuteo* on 13 Nov at 24.6°N 57.8°E, and a male Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* and a White Wagtail *Alba* on 16 Nov. A "small grey-brown falcon" was also reported.

1988

WRPB recorded a Swallow *H. rustica* early am on 5 Feb in position 25.2°N 57.0°E. Single Hoopoes *Upupa epops* were seen by WRPB on 3, 6, 7 Aug and two on 10 Aug. A Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos* was flying high SW on 11 Aug in position 24.4°N 58.0°E.

## SECTION I - PACIFIC, CHINA SEA, YELLOW SEA, CORAL SEA AND PHILIPPINE SEA

1988

In the North Pacific on 5 Feb, JWG reported two "ravens" (no further details) which alighted on board 15 mins, 7nm north of Attu Island, Aleutians.

On 7 Mar a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* was aboard MV *Liverpool Bay* (Met) in position 23.5°N 124.7°E, 90nm west of Korea. It remained for 2½ hours.

On 24 Mar BG saw several Grey Starlings *Sturnus cineraceus* 80nm east of Honshu, Japan (37.6°N 142.8°W) and on 4 Apr a Japanese Wagtail *Motacilla grandis* 30nm north of Nansei Shoto Is. (29.2°N 131.7°W). When in vicinity of Okinawa (26.1°N 128.1°E) a male Siberian Rubythroat *Erithacus calliope* was caught and photographed, and at least five Ryukyu Robins *E. komadori*. One female was caught and photographed. Also on board was a Red-capped Green Pigeon *Shenurus sieboldii* and a Bush Warbler *Cettia diphone*. A possible Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* flew past on 7 Apr when 180nm west of Philippines (15.4°N 116.3°E).

On 6 Apr SDM photographed a White-collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris* which arrived aboard soon after leaving Papua New Guinea; a similar bird had been seen on 28 Mar in the Torres Strait. ARL recorded another aboard on 15 May in position 19.2°S 176.5°W, 70nm SE Argo Reefs, Fiji.

On 21 May a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* landed aboard MV *Abbey* (Met) in position 16.9°N 129.8°E, 420nm east of Luzon, and remained until arrival on 28th at Fukuyama, Japan, where it was attacked by a large bird of prey, and was subsequently found dead.

On 23 Sep RJT recorded a Galah *Cacatua roseicapilla* flying low alongside when 94nm east of Sydney, 34.0°N 153.2°E. It was tired and flopped into the water where it was mobbed by a pair of Cape Pigeons *Daption capensis*, and later joined by two Wandering Albatrosses *Diomedea exulans*. The outcome was not observed.





Ryuku Robin *Erithacus komadori*, off Okinawa, Pacific, April 1988  
 Photo: Bengt Grandin, Sw.MN



Collared (or Mangrove) Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris*,  
 Central Pacific

Photo: Captain S. D. Mayl, MN

On 13 Oct two large falcons, possibly Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* were aboard MV *Craiglas* (Met) in position 07.4°N 108.7°E, 180nm SE Mekong Delta, Vietnam. One was larger than the other (probably M and F), and were seen apparently fighting each other. One was seen to catch a small yellow finch, and several corpses of "finches" and a "plover" were found next day on the decks. On 15th, when 200nm E. Vietnam (13.0°N 113.0°E) a small flock of "herons" (possibly Indian Pond-herons *Ardeola grayii*) were aboard having difficulty in maintaining their feet in the strong SE wind force 4/5. Also still around were 4-5 small "finches", which had survived predation from the falcons.

On 28 October SS *Rimula* (Met) recorded a Siberian Rubythroat *Erithacus calliope* in position 27.2°N 126.5°E, 50nm NW Okinawa and 300nm SE mainland China. On 30 Oct a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* was aboard in position 17.8°N 126.3°E 220 nm east of Luzon, Philippines. Also noted during this period were three Green-backed Herons *Butorides striatus* (two adult, one juv), and a juvenile Common Gallinule *Gallinula chloropus*.

On 10 Nov an unidentified falcon was reported aboard MV *Nosira Lin* (Met) in position 49°N 165.9°W, 500nm SE Kurile Is. It was seen to fly off heading north.

On 18 Nov in the Eastern Pacific, MV *Melanpus* (Met) reported an American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* briefly aboard in position 18.0°N 105.0°W - 60nm SW of Mexico.

On 3 Dec MV *Liverpool Bay* (Met) was passing westbound through the Malacca Straits in heavy rain and a number of small unidentified birds were found, including a probable pond-heron, and a possible Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* which remained skulking aboard for five days.

## SECTION J - SOUTH ATLANTIC

1988

On 4 Mar a probable Great White Egret *Egretta alba* landed briefly aboard MV *West Moor* (Met) in position 40.6°S 49.1°W, 420nm SE Argentina.

On 11 Oct MV *Falklands Desire* (Met) recorded a Rufous-backed Negrito *Lessonia rufa* aboard briefly in position 52.3°N 61.4°W, about 30nm WSW of Cape Meredith, West Falklands. The prevailing winds during the previous few days had been strong NW'ly, and Robin Woods (pers. comm.) comments that this distinctive species of Tyrant Flycatcher was probably a late migrant (i.e. in its first breeding season) on its southward passage towards Tierra del Fuego when blown offshore by the strong NW winds.

On 31 Oct MV *West Moor* (Met) recorded a probable Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* circling the ship in position 33.3°S 38.6°W, 630nm SE Cape Sta. Marta Grande, Uruguay.

# LANDBIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA, 1988.

By Commander M.B. Casement, O.B.E., Royal Navy.

Records from or near Station Lima (57°N 20°W - 210nm WSW Rockall, 450nm S. Iceland) were received from R.C.L. Aran and Met. Staff of OWS *Cumulus*, and observations cover the following periods: 11 Apr-8 May, 14-28 May, 25 Aug, 6 Sep-1 Oct, 19 Oct-5 Nov, 10-27 Nov.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*. Four probables heading north on 11 Apr. Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligida*. Group of 9 circled on 27 Nov and settled in water. Scaup *A. marila*. One on 13 Sep swimming alongside vessel.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*. One Adult (F) swimming close alongside 24 Oct, four (2M+2F) landed in water close on 28 Oct, one (F) swimming close on 5 Nov.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*. One aboard throughout am 29 Sep and another am 1 Oct. Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*. One aboard 1 Nov. Caught and caged, released 7 Nov.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*. One flying west on 14 May.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*. Found sheltering on 28-30 May. Caught, caged and fed 30th, but died 31 May.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*. 24 Apr (3+2), 25 Apr (2), 26 Apr (2, one died), 27 Apr (1), 15 May (2).

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. Singles on 6, 8, and 10 Sep.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris alpina*. One probable circling on 23 Apr.

Sanderling *Crocethia alba*. Singles aboard 18-21 May and 19 Oct.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*. 20 Apr (one probable flying NW), 22 Apr (2 dep. N), 24 Apr (1+1 heading NNW), 25 Apr (one aboard), 26 Apr (one aboard, died), 27 Apr (one aboard 1hr), 24 Oct (1).

Common Sandpiper *T. hypoleucos*. 17 May (1), 26 Oct (1), 27 Oct (2, one died 29th). Dunlin *Calidris alpina*. 20 Apr (1), 24 Apr (2), 14 May (1), 15 May (2), singles 16 May, 28 Aug and 25 Oct.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*. 18 Apr (one circling, dep. NW), 24 Oct (1), 25 Oct (1 probable on deck), 26 Oct (3).

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*. 20 Oct (2 aboard), 30 Oct (1).

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*. 20-22 Oct (1), 2 Nov (1), 4 Nov (1).

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*. One on board 31 Oct.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*. Singles circling on 16 May, 22-24 May and 14 Nov.

House Martin *Delichon urbica*. One 22-26 May.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*. One caught and released 29 Apr, one probable 18 May, one on 1 Nov (caught and caged, released 7th).

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*. One on 3 May.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisora*? One possible (F?) on 20 Oct - "white throat, white double wing-bar".

Blackcap *S. atricapilla*. 19 Oct (1M+1F), 24 Oct (1M), 1 Nov (1F).

Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca*. One on 1 Nov.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*. One on 8 May.

Wood Warbler *P. sibilatrix*? Probable singles on 31 Oct and 1 Nov (juv).

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Singles aboard briefly 3 and 19, 6 Sep (3), 7 Sep (1), 19 Oct (2), 31 Oct (1).

Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellina*. One on 18 May - "large, sandy coloured".

Blackbird *Turdus merula*. 19 Oct (17), 21 Oct (1F), 24 Oct (1F).

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*. 14 Apr (4), 19 Apr (3), 26 Apr (1), 3 May (1), 20 Oct (14), 21 Oct (2), 17 Nov (1).

Redwing *T. iliacus*. Singles on 19, 20 Apr and 19 Sep 19 Oct (2), 20 Oct (8), 21 Oct (1), 24 Oct (2), 25 Oct (7), singles on 26, 28 and 31 Oct, 3 Nov (2).  
 Mistle Thrush *T. viscivorus*. Three on 19 Oct.  
 Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*. One on 17 Nov.  
 Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*. 19 Oct (4), 20 Oct (1), 31 Oct (1M+1F).  
 Brambling *F. montifringilla*. 19 Oct (1 juv M dead), 20 Oct (2).  
 Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. 19 Oct (7), 20 Oct (42 live + 60 dead), 21 Oct (5).

The spring migration was fairly "normal", but the autumn highlight was the spectacular fall of passerines during the period 19-22 Oct. An anticyclone over northern Scandinavia, coupled with a large depression centred to the west of UK, resulted in many species being swept SW from N. Russia over Europe and NW out into the Atlantic. Large numbers were found on deck in the early morning of 19 Oct, and many more were heard but not seen beyond the lights of the ship. Those aboard included starlings (7), Wheatear (2), Redwing (2), Chaffinch (4), Blackcap (2), and one Brambling. Most were exhausted; a Chaffinch, Redwing, Blackcap and Starling were caught and caged. After 19 days of hand feeding they were improved enough to be released on 7 Nov when near to land. The wind on 19th was 080°/12kts, but on 20th veered to 210°/7kts, and numbers increased dramatically to include 102 Starlings, 17 Blackbirds, 14 Fieldfares and the "possible" Barred Warbler; also two Long-eared Owls and a Short-eared Owl, which preyed on the Starlings. Numerous pellets and bird remains were scattered on deck. Starlings were also seen eating the dead, and drinking their blood - obviously in dire need of water. On 21st only one Short-eared Owl remained, plus five Starlings, one Blackbird, a Redwing and two Fieldfares. These walked within inches of the owl, apparently sensing they were safe because the owl had just fed. On 22nd only the owl remained, and the deck was covered with bits of dead birds.

Another fruitful period occurred with strong southerly winds 31 Oct-1 Nov when a Tawny Owl, Chaffinch, a number of warbler species, and a Water Rail came aboard; also a Red Admiral butterfly *Vanessa atalanta* was caught on the bridge - a clear indication of south-easterly origins.

## SEABIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHER SHIP STATION LIMA (57°N 20°W), 1988

By Captain P.W.G. Chilman, M.N.

All observations are again from O.W.S. *Cumulus*, and the format of the summary table remains as in previous years. The periods of observations are not continuous and total 288 days, a decrease of one day from 1987.

Totals of daily counts were (including immatures shown in brackets) 10,876 Fulmars (21 blue phase), 132 Gannets (42 immatures), 1 Herring Gull (0), 431 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (127), 191 Greater Black-backed Gulls (69), 35 Glaucous Gulls (11), and 11,294 Kittiwakes (3,745).

The only new species reported this year was a single Little Tern in June. This breeds on both sides of the Atlantic, and there is no reason why a stray should not occur in mid-ocean. Of 6 Guillemots recorded, one was a Bridled Guillemot, the first time this form has been reported.

Species reported in previous years but not seen in 1988 were Cory's Shearwater, Little Shearwater, Wilson's Storm-petrel, Little Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, Sandwich Tern, Razorbill and Puffin.

Fulmars were back to their 1986 numbers, although March was the only month to average over 100 per day, with a figure of 108. Encouragingly, a single Fulmar in February was the only instance of an oiled bird reported this year.

Numbers of the less common birds still vary wildly, with the exception of the Great Skua which has totalled 140-150 for four of the last five years.

As always, the R.N.B.W.S. must thank the Met. Staff of O.W.S. *Cumulus* for their continued splendid and valuable reports.

### OCEAN WEATHER SHIP OBSERVATIONS

#### Summary of Seabird Sightings Station Lima (57°N 20°W)

Month 1988	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Observation days (288)	20	28	27	24	25	25	16	25	28	22	23	25
Fulmar	o	o	o	o	o	o	x	x	o	x	o	o
Great Shearwater								-	-			
Sooty Shearwater			-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-		
Manx Shearwater	-				-	-	-	+	-	-		
British Storm-petrel	-			-				-		-		
Leach's Storm-petrel							-	-	-		-	
Gannet	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	
Great Skua	-		-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-		-
Pomarine Skua			-	-	-	-			-			
Arctic Skua				-	-	-	-		-			
Long-tailed Skua					-	-		-	-			
Herring Gull			-									
Lesser Black-backed Gull	-		-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	
Greater Black-backed Gull	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Glaucous Gull	-	-	-	-					-	-	-	
Iceland Gull										-		
Kittiwake	x	o	x	o	o	o	+	o	o	o	o	o
Black-headed Gull				-	-	-	-	-		+		
Arctic Tern		-			-	-		-		-	-	
Common Tern				-		-	-	-	-			
Little Tern						-						
Little Auk	-		-	-	-		-				-	-
Guillemot					-	-	-				-	

KEY      - Occasional sightings      o Average 10-49 per day  
           + Average 1-9 per day        x Average 50 or more per day

## SHORT NOTES

### SEABIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM MET. LOGBOOKS

By Captain P.W.G. Chilman. M.N.

Once again we have received many reports of birds extracted from Met. Logs, thanks to the kindness of the Marine Division of the Meteorological Office. A few were unidentifiable due to insufficient detail, and I had to disagree with three as being too unlikely for various reasons. But the bulk were either identified on board, or were accompanied by excellent descriptions and sketches from which it was possible to make at least a reasonable suggestion as to their identification.

The following are a selection of the more unusual and interesting reports received:-

In *Sea Swallow* 35 (p36) and 37 (p43) there were reports of Laysan Albatrosses *Diomedea immutabilis* courting on board, and now we have a report of what appears to be Wandering Albatross *D. exulans* courting on the sea, as follows: S.S. *Act 1*, Captain R. Brownbill. On 3 January 1988 in position 37°17'S 132°25'E, vessel stopped and drifting for repairs. Six birds were noted nearby, four white adults and two young Wandering Albatrosses. The display consisted of the nearly white adult birds pairing up and nibbling necks and beaks, with one of each pair rearing up and spreading their wings. This continued for about five minutes. The two younger birds tried to become involved but were ignored.

M.V. *Flinders Bay*, Captain R. Brinkworth. On 21 February 1988 a large albatross, thought to be a Wanderer, was observed on the fo'c'sle standing with its back to the weather. Still there on 23rd, it was picked up and then thrown overboard; it flew off happily. As albatrosses have difficulty taking off from ships this would appear to have been the proper course, but it is not noted whether or not the bird objected.

M.V. *Remuera Bay*, Captain W.C. Carruthers. On 5 April 1988 in 54.8°S 132.3°W, reported what was believed to be a Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*. This is well outside their normal range, but there does not seem to be any other likely species of this description occurring in this area, and it is possible that it could have strayed round Cape Horn from its winter quarters.

M.V. *Abbey*, Captain E. James. 12 July 1988 at 30°S 72°E, reported a White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina* aboard all day, having been discovered inside the accommodation in the morning, and launched overboard after dark, which I think is probably the best action with storm-petrels. It was offered slivers of fish which, as is normal in my experience, it ignored. It was observed to hop 'two legged' about the deck, which I found interesting, as most species of storm-petrels of which I have experience can manage only a shuffle on bent legs.

Two more reports of the Christmas Island race of the White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus fulvus* off northern Sumatra were received this year, one from M.V. *Naticina*, Captain T.P. Hughes on 6 Sep in position 5°8'N 88°5'E, and another from M.V. *Osco Macle*, Captain

C. Kulkarni on 14 Oct in position 6.1°N 90.8°E. Two were noted in *Sea Swallow* 37 (p44) , and I have also seen them in this area. My guess is that they spread up the west side of Sumatra, and if any ships traversed these seas, would be found to be reasonably common there. On behalf of RNBWS I would like to thank all those who have compiled reports in the Met. Logs; their efforts are much appreciated.

Captain P.W.G. Chilman, M.N., 15 Garbett Way, Bishophorpe, York YO2 1SF.

## WHERE DO WINTERING AUDOUIN'S GULLS FEED?

By Dr. E.F.J. García

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* has increased spectacularly in the western Mediterranean in the last 20 years. The major colony of 2,800 pairs on the Chafarinas islands, off Melilla on the Moroccan coast has been substantially supplemented by a new one at the Ebro Delta on the Spanish Mediterranean coast. This latter was only established in 1981 but rose to over 2,600 pairs by 1986 and is still increasing, so that in 1988 the known world population was about 8,000 pairs (de Juana (Varela, in press). The Ebro colony is on low-lying coastal flats, and represents an interesting change in nesting habitat for a species formerly associated with rocky islets.

The reasons for the increase remain speculative, but reflect improved conservation measures. The Chafarinas colony rose from 1,930 pairs in 1986 to 2,845 pairs in 1987, in association with culling of the much more numerous Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*, which compete with Audouin's Gulls for space and are serious predators of their eggs and young (SEO, 1987). Perhaps then, the establishment of the Ebro colony, where Audouin's greatly outnumber Herring Gulls, is the major influence in their recent success. Perhaps they have access to a new or increased food supply. Perhaps, and less probably, their survival has improved because of a change of migration habits or winter quarters. More observations on what these gulls do away from breeding sites would help to clarify the situation. This note is a request for such information, and also a summary of recently published relevant material.

Most of the Audouin's Gulls from the western Mediterranean winter along the African Atlantic coast, between southern Morocco and Senegal, but chiefly along the Western Sahara (Hoogendoorn & Mackrill, 1987). Small groups remain on Spanish and African Mediterranean shores, and a few can be found in winter on the Spanish Atlantic coast. The species is abundant in the Strait of Gibraltar during its westward migration which, given present population levels, involves a minimum of 10,000 birds. Sub-adults pass west at Gibraltar throughout July, with adults and juveniles being numerous throughout August and September. Smaller numbers remain through October, but most have moved south by November. However, 40 at Tarifa beach on 25 December 1987 (pers. obs.) may indicate an increasing winter presence there. The return passage is less obvious. Presumably the birds do not linger so long on the shorelines then. It occurs from late February to May, most passing through the Strait in March and April.



Adult Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, Gibraltar  
August, 1988

Photo: Ernest Garcia

During the autumn migration periods, flocks of Audouin's Gulls build up in selected localities near the Strait of Gibraltar, and no doubt elsewhere. The gatherings at Tarifa beach, north of Gibraltar at Sotogrande and at Punta Secreta, on the southwestern portion of the Bay of Gibraltar, are regular. Typically the flocks number anything up to 200 birds. They spend much of their time resting on the beach and little feeding activity is ever seen nearby. No doubt there is substantial turnover of the individuals comprising these apparently static flocks, and the birds may be physiologically prepared for migration with ample food reserves. Nevertheless, colour ringing has shown that some individuals remain at these sites for prolonged periods. It would therefore be interesting to have any observations which may be made of these gulls actively feeding at sea here or elsewhere.

Early accounts, reviewed by Smith (1972), implied that Audouin's Gull is a pelagic species, the then scarcity of records away from the nesting colonies being attributed to wintering in the open ocean. Smith (1965) showed that it occurs in winter along the Moroccan coasts, and there have been many subsequent observations confirming its presence here and further south. Most such records refer to small flocks seen resting on sandy beaches. It seems most likely that Audouin's Gulls feed offshore, perhaps in the region of the Canaries Current (de Juana *et al.* 1987), and they should be looked for by visitors to these Atlantic waters, especially between November and February.





Juvenile Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, Gibraltar  
August 1988

Photo: Ernest Garcia

The diet in winter, and during migration, does not seem to have been studied. However, the species is known to have dynamic fishing techniques, often lunging after fish from a shallow glide (Wallace, 1969) and it is much less a general scavenger than the Herring Gull. In the Mediterranean, the Sardine *Sardina pilchardus* is a major component of the diet and much feeding activity is nocturnal (Witt et al, 1981), and often well offshore (Hoogendoorn & Mackrill, 1987). Since most published observations of the species in winter or on passage do not refer to its behaviour, it would be of value to have any notes which RNBWS members may make of feeding individuals or flocks seen at sea. If the nocturnal feeding habit really is predominant, and if the observations of winter flocks resting all day on the African shoreline represent the behaviour of the majority, then these gulls are most likely to be observed offshore at dusk or dawn, as they arrive and depart respectively from their fishing grounds. Indications of the nature of food taken would be especially useful if it could be ascertained. The Editor would welcome such records.

Audouin's Gull is striking and easily identified (see photos). The best descriptions are those of Grant (1986). The juvenile and first-winter birds may be more easily overlooked, but their compact dark appearance, with contrasting pale crowns, brown flank patches, black tails, white rumps and strongly-marked underwing patterns, is distinctive.

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- Dr. E.F.J. Garcia, 2 Busdens Close, Milford, Godalming, Surrey, GU8 5JS.

## THE CARONI SWAMP BIRD SANCTUARY - TRINIDAD

By Signalman Michael Stannard, RFA *OAKLEAF*

On Sunday 16 October 1988, whilst visiting Port of Spain on RFA *Oakleaf*, I was fortunate to participate in a conducted visit and tour of the Caroni Swamp Bird Sanctuary in Trinidad, mainly to see the Scarlet Ibis *Eudocimus ruber* returning to roost in the Caroni Swamps. The Scarlet Ibis is Trinidad's most famous bird, and was adopted as the national bird in 1962. Since then it has received official protection, and numbers in the Caroni Swamp sometimes reach as many as 12,000.

The Caroni Swamp is an area of about 6,000 hectares of marshland, about 25 kms from Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad. The area is influenced by the sea, and is tidal. There is also a great deal of freshwater draining through the swamp, and this mixture of salt and freshwater creates a brackish condition with the salinity fluctuating due to seasonal factors: my visit coincided with the wet season. This makes living conditions difficult for both plant and animal life, and as a result many of the species found in the Caroni Swamp are unique to this area.

The vegetation is mainly mangrove, of which there are three main types: the Red Mangrove is the most abundant species, recognisable by its prop-root system of self-support. The Black Mangrove grows mainly on mud-flats and embankments, and has lanceolate leaves and breeding phemotaphoses at the base of the trunk; this species has the ability to desalinate the salty seawater. The White Mangrove is recognised by its ovate leaves and is found mainly on embankments and firm ground.

Fluctuation of the salinity controls the presence of mammals and reptiles in the area. Spectacled Caiman may be seen during the wet season when the salinity is low, but Alligators are ever-present. Crab-eating Raccoon and Two-toed Sloth are both present all year, but are nocturnal and difficult to spot during the day.

A great number of fish abound in the area - groupers, tarpon, snappers, yellow-tails, mackerel, to name but a few. Crab and other marine life are plentiful. When the mud banks are exposed at low tide, thousands of Fiddler Crabs can be seen, and tree-climbing crabs are found in the mangroves. Other marine life can be observed on the mangrove roots - oysters, barnacles, sea anemones, tube-worms, hydroids, wireferns etc.

However the main reason for the expedition was for the bird life; about 160 species are to be found in the area. The commonest, apart from the Scarlet Ibis and main attraction, are Great Blue Herons *Ardea herodias*, White-necked Heron *A. cocoi*, Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus*, Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*, Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Black-bellied Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis*, Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*, Purple Gallinule *Porphyula martinica*, Wattled Jacana *Jacana jacana*, Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, Solitary Sandpiper *T. solitaria*, and Green Kingfisher *Chloroceryle americana* - to name but a few.

We departed by boat up the Blue River at about 1600. Sunset was about 1730 - when the Scarlet Ibis comes back from their feeding grounds to roost. We slowly wound our way up the narrow waterways and many of the more common birds were spotted as they were disturbed by our boat's engine noise. Our guide Winston Nanan pointed out the species to the not so well-informed amongst the group.

After about three-quarters of an hour we were approaching the area where the Scarlet Ibis chooses to roost, and we could see a few of the early arrivals flying in. Our guide pointed out a couple of small islands of mangrove, about 150-200 yards away; he switched off the engine, and we just drifted gently. The number of Scarlet Ibis increased over the next 15-20 minutes, adults and juveniles arriving separately in groups of about 30. Suddenly the mangroves began to look more like flowering bushes, with bright red flowers appearing everywhere. It was like watching time-lapse photography of a bud bursting into flower, as more and more red appeared on the green-leaved mangroves, until each mangrove island seemed to be more red than green. By sunset the flood of red had slowed to a trickle, as the last stragglers came home to roost.

Although the weather had been wet and cold, watching this spectacle through binoculars was a truly memorable experience, and one I shall treasure for years to come. For anybody fortunate enough to visit the island of Trinidad, a trip to the Caroni Swamp is a must. There are two very good bird books available - *Birds of Trinidad and Tobago* by Richard Ffrench, price about \$3 and published by Macmillan Caribbean, and *A Birder's Guide to Trinidad and Tobago*, by William L. Murphy (1987), Peregrine Enterprises Inc, Maryland, USA.

Signalman M. Stannard, 82 Austin Crescent, Crownhill, Plymouth, S. Devon PL6 5QH.

## SEABIRD NOTES FROM SRI LANKA 1988

Rex I. De Silva, FZS, MBOU.

Landbased observations carried out in 1988 by Rex De Silva (RS), Brindley de Zylva (BZ), David Templeman (DT) and Deepal Warakagoda (DW), of the SEABIRD WATCH (SRI LANKA) resulted in several interesting sightings which, together with the results of a museum study, are noted below. All field observations were carried out from the beach at Wellawatte, Colombo (6°52'N 79°51'E, alt. 2m). The majority of birds were observed at distances ranging from c.200m to 1.5km. The sea depths in the area of observation varied from c.5-30m. Most observations were carried out between 0630 and 0800 during the SW monsoon period (ie. June to September). Several binoculars and a PENTAX 30 X 40 telescope were used.

### PROCELLARIIDAE.

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*.

RS saw an unfamiliar petrel four times on 7th and 10th September. Only one bird was seen at a time, with a telescope in fine weather at distances ranging from 100 to 400m, so it is possible that the same individual was observed repeatedly. The back was grey to grey-brown; the underparts, including the undertail coverts, white; both surfaces of the tail grey; the legs and feet pale - probably flesh-coloured; the head white with grey crown, black mask and short stout black bill; and there was a greyish pectoral band. The bird(s) flew fast with rapid wingbeats on a zig-zag course, and were occasionally seen to glide. They changed direction frequently, as though seeking food, and usually flew at less than 50m above the sea surface. Referring to Harrison (1985) and Tuck & Heinzel (1978), they were identified as Soft-plumaged Petrels; they differed from Barau's Petrel *P. barau* in having grey, not white underwings. The occurrence of *P. mollis* in Sri Lankan waters is unusual, as this species has never been recorded from the N. Indian Ocean.

### STERCORARIIDAE

Brown Skua *Catharacta antarctica lomnbergi*.

The Colombo Museum Collection includes four specimens of Southern Skuas, three of which were earlier identified as *C. a. antarctica*. These specimens are all more than 50 years old, and were (presumably) identified by the then Museum Staff, although the fourth one is said to have been identified as *C. maccormicki* at the British Museum in 1886 or so. The specimens were re-examined by RS and the measurements of culmen and tarsi are given:

Culmen, 53mm - 58mm, Av. 55.5mm

Tarsus, 72mm - 81mm, Av. 76.3mm

These measurements are larger than those of *C. a. antarctica* and *C. maccormicki*, as given by Ali and Ripley (1982) and Devillers (1977), but agree well with those of *C. a. lomnbergi* (De Silva in press). There is little doubt therefore that all the Sri Lankan specimens are *C. a. lomnbergi*. Approximately half a dozen skuas of the genus *Catharacta* are seen, on average, each season by observers of the SEABIRD WATCH, and most are probably Brown Skuas, but see below.

South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*.

RS, BZ and DT observed a South Polar Skua flying northwards about 100m from shore on 10 July. The bird, which was probably a dark morph, differed from Brown Skuas by the presence of a pale hind-collar, and a pale patch at the base of the bill. As the only earlier record of this species was a mistake, this is probably the first authentic sighting from Sri Lanka.

#### STERNIDAE

Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris*.

RS observed a single Lesser Noddy on 17 September. It was flying southwards about 200m offshore in the company of a few Bridled Terns. Dead Lesser Noddies have been recorded earlier (De Silva 1979, 1980), but this is the first live bird seen in Sri Lanka.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* migration.

The annual mass migration of Bridled Terns proceeded at a relatively low intensity in 1988. Although the highest count recorded in a single hour by RS and DW was 1,928 birds (20 Sep), the hourly average was relatively low. The duration of migration cannot easily be explained as the phenomenon is not well understood. For instance, it is not known whether the birds winter in Sri Lankan waters, or if some at least are passage migrants, following the SW monsoon drift to winter quarters further east. Their breeding grounds are not well known, although it is assumed that they come from one or more of the populations nesting in the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Makran coast, Laccadive and Maldive Islands. The route by which they return to their breeding grounds also remains a mystery (De Silva 1987). It was also evident that many of the species associated with the migrating terns showed a corresponding decline; for instance, very few Sooty Terns *S. fuscata*, Lesser Crested Terns *S. bengalensis* and Common Terns *S. hirundo* were seen during 1988. Pomarine Skuas *S. pomarinus*, Brown Skuas and Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus*, normally present in moderate numbers during the latter part of the migration, were conspicuous by their absence.

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Rex I. De Silva, Hepporawatte, Dampe, Madapatha, (via Piliyandala), Sri Lanka.

## McCORMICK'S SKUA IN NORTH-WEST EUROPEAN WATERS

By W.R.P. Bourne

In the past nobody bothered to look at bonxies seen in the North Atlantic carefully because it was assumed that they must all be Great Skuas *Catharacta (s.) skua*. Then Pierre Devillers (1977) found an old specimen of an immature McCormick's (or "South Polar") Skua *Skua maccormicki* collected in Greenland in 1902 and identified as a Great Skua in Copenhagen, and another ringed in the Antarctic was recovered there (Salomonsen 1976). Since then it has been found in the spring (Veit 1978, Jensen 1982, Lee 1989, and regional reports in *American Birds*).

We have already published observations of possible pale birds seen off Brittany on 26 September 1973 (Bourne 1982) and Islay on 17 July 1977 (Verrall 1982) which suggest that like some other southern seabirds, such as the Great and Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus gravis* and *P. griseus*, McCormick's Skua may also regularly visit European waters on the way south in the autumn. Between 1982 and 1988 there have been seven more unconfirmed observations off Britain, including five from St Ives, Cornwall, one at sea in that area, one off Norfolk, and one from Antrim, Ireland, between 19 August and 18 October, in "Recent reports" in *British Birds*, though we are still waiting for a full account of any of these birds.

Since those seen in the North Atlantic are usually in immature plumage, when they are often difficult to identify, it seemed desirable to locate a European specimen to confirm its occurrence here. One possible example which was apparently also first noticed by R.R.Veit (*pers. comm.*) has been reported by Boertmann *et al* (1986) in Danish, translated by Prof. T.C. Smout as follows:

"1889: 24.9. Faeroes, female juv. This specimen is in the possession of the American Museum of Natural History. The bird is in moult with the four outermost primaries old and the rest growing. Unfortunately the collector's name is not indicated on the label so that there may be some doubt about its authenticity. The skin has been obtained from the Rothschild Museum at Tring. All information has been obtained from I.C.T. Nisbet (*in litt*). It is the first record of this bird from Europe, and it has only occasionally been recorded from the North Atlantic area, ie Greenland (Salomonsen 1976) and near Newfoundland (Jensen 1982)".

According to the Rothschild Museum label this specimen, now AMNH No. 744420, was originally "bought from Schlüter", presumably Wilhelm Schlüter of Halle, who seems to have been casual over labelling specimens (M. Walters *pers. comm.*). In an attempt to confirm its origin Dr Mary Lecroy at the American Museum of Natural History arranged for me to examine it with Dr Alan Knox at the British Museum (Natural History). It is undoubtedly a young, uniformly dark *C. maccormicki*, and has a small original machine-made label inscribed "*Lestris cataractes* Faroer Inseln 24/9 89 (female sign)" on one side, and "No 192" on the other in Schlüter's writing.

The BM(NH) collection includes eleven Great Skua skins from the Faeroes in the second half of the last century, some of which also have similar but not identical labels in the same writing, with the addition of the name of a well-known local naturalist living on Stremoy,

H.C. Müller: there therefore seems no reason to doubt that skua skins collected in the Faeroes were being sold by Schlüter at that time. Unfortunately the manner of preparation of the skin in question is not identical with that of the definite Faeroe skins, however, and we were surprised to find it stuffed with dried vegetation identified by Mr T. Lawrence at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, as a species of eel-grass *Zostera*.

Dr Jon Fjeldsa has subsequently examined some twenty birds including five Great Skuas collected by H.C. Müller in the Zoologisk Museum, Copenhagen, and reports that, as with the British specimen, where the stuffing can be seen it consists of tow and hay. While he could not find any skins stuffed with *Zostera*, which certainly grows in the Faeroes among many other places, he was also informed that this was formerly sometimes used in Denmark for stuffing furniture and also bird skins. Thus while the state of moult of this specimen seems characteristic of immature birds collected in the northern hemisphere (Salomonsen 1976, Jensen 1982, R. Veit (*in litt*)), and there seems nothing basically improbable about the statement that the skin comes from the Faeroes, there is still no definite proof of its origin.

Meanwhile on 4 September 1988 I saw a similar small, agile, uniformly dark brown Great Skua with bright wing-flashes and a short, slender bill which lacked any trace of rufous or streaking on the upperparts flying rapidly SSW about 250m away off the edge of the European continental shelf at 47.1°N 7.3°W, 120nm SW of the Pte. du Raz, NW France, and about 150nm SW of my previous record of an unusually pale bonxie fifteen years before (Bourne 1982, since when I have seen a number of similar McCormick's Skuas in the southern hemisphere). A similar but much darker bird was also seen at 60.1°N 04.7°W, 70nm NW of the Orkneys, on 27 Jun 1989. It seems time more effort was made to verify the European status of these birds.

I am grateful to all the people and institutions already mentioned and also Mr Graham Cowles at the British Museum (Natural History) and Mrs Dorete Bloch at the Foroya Náttúrugripasavn for their assistance.

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## OBITUARIES

### Lieutenant Arthur Gilpin, RNVR - 1908-1988

Arthur Gilpin joined the Royal Navy in 1941 as an Able Seaman, and in 1942 was commissioned and promoted to Lieutenant RNVR, and attached to the Fleet Air Arm's Photographic Section. He died of a heart attack in 1988 aged 80, leaving a widow and daughter.

When the RNBWS was formed in 1946, Arthur became both a founder member, and a member of the Editorial Committee responsible for the Society's Annual Report, *Sea Swallow*. His hobby before World War II had been bird photography, and he was a founder member of the Zoological Photographic Club (Z.P.C.). In 1950 he was awarded the Royal Photographic Society's medal for nature photography, becoming President of the Z.P.C. and a council member of the RSPB. Leeds University acknowledged Arthur's ability by conferring on him an Honorary M.Sc., of which he was justifiably proud.

The RNBWS was indeed fortunate to have such an expert, not only on bird photography, but on ornithology in general. Arthur's skills also included making his own cameras and "period" furniture. A browse through back numbers of *Sea Swallow* will show a number of his outstanding results, with a sharpness of focus and quality which few can match, even today with modern hi-tech cameras and lenses. His photographic contributions will be greatly missed, not only by our Society, but by the publishers and readers of the many natural history magazines and books which he helped to illustrate.

N.A.G.H.B and M.B.C.

### Captain S.D. (Sam) Mayl, MN - 1933-1989

Members will be sad to learn that Sam Mayl died on 4 April, having been taken ill and flown home from RRS *Charles Darwin*, in the South Atlantic.

He also was a fine bird photographer, but came to the notice of RNBWS only recently. He entered a large number of high quality colour photographs and slides for the first *Sea Swallow* Photographic Competition in 1986, and deservedly won second prize and a "Highly Commended". Many of these have appeared in recent editions of this journal, and I hope to use more in the years to come.

Sam joined RNBWS in 1986, as a direct result of this success, and has been a regular contributor of both observations and photographs ever since. He leaves a widow and a son, and will be greatly missed by many.

His last contribution is shown as the 'Tailpiece' on page 69.

M.B.C.



### **Captain J.A.F. Jenkins, MN**

With the demise of Captain John Jenkins in February 1989, at his home in New Zealand, the society loses a member who has made the task of the Editor, researcher, and casual observer a far easier one; John initiated and undertook the major work of indexing the first 34 volumes of *Sea Swallow*, which was published in 1987 in cooperation with the Australian Seabird Group, and he has left on disk all the data for this to be kept up to date in future years.

He joined RNBWS in 1956, and besides his dedicated work on the Index, has contributed several papers in *Sea Swallow* and elsewhere. Through his efforts we shall all have cause to remember him with gratitude in the years to come.

S.E.C.

## REVIEWS

Tony Soper 1989. *Oceans of Birds*. Pp.208. 75 colour plates, 75 line drawings. David and Charles, Newton Abbott. £12.95. ISBN 0-7153-9199-2.

Due to be published in October, this should earn a place on the bookshelf of any seafarer with even a passing interest in birds. Lavishly illustrated with superbly reproduced colour photographs, and sensitive drawings by Mick Loates, it is excellent value for the price. It is aimed not at the serious ornithologist, or the professional mariner, but at the increasing number of tourists and yachtsmen who take holiday cruises to strange and far-away places, and with time on their hands at sea. Over the past few years P. & O has taken the author around the world as a bird lecturer, and this book aims to persuade the cruise-ship passengers to leave their deck chairs to cast a glance at the birds occasionally, as an antidote to bingo and large meals.

As a well known popular author and broadcaster Tony Soper needs no introduction, and is ideally qualified for this task. The result is a light-hearted and highly readable book full of interest and good advice for anyone curious to learn more about the world of birds around them, even for those who have spent a lifetime at sea and claim to know their birds. Many of the routes and places visited are off the beaten track for normal commercial or naval vessels, and some of the names of species and illustrations will be unfamiliar to many. The author is himself an RNBWS member, and not only gives welcome publicity about the society's aims, but has included a number of photographs from RNBWS sources, thus contributing generously to the society's funds.

This book will not help the novice to distinguish a "two-toed nit-wit" from a "hoodwink": there are numerous field guides for this purpose, and these are listed here. But I am sure that many seagoers will be encouraged by it to try to find out, and to look more closely at the birds they meet at sea. It should make an ideal Christmas present for someone planning for his retirement with a sea cruise. I frequently threaten to take my wife to Alaska, Galapagos, or the Antarctic....!

M.B.C.

Clark, G. 1988. *The Totorore Voyage*. Pp.357, 32 colour plates, 29 maps. London: Century Hutchinson. £15.95. ISBN 0-7126-2438-4.

This is the log of an heroic expedition from New Zealand around the Southern Ocean for three years eight months in a home-made 11-metre yacht to visit the seabird colonies. Setting out via the Chatham Islands and Juan Fernandez (where I joined them for a couple of weeks) they spent two summers exploring the southern coast of Chile and Antarctic Peninsula, and two winters surveying the outlying Falklands and South Georgia, before returning home via the Indian Ocean.

During this time Captain Clark lost two masts, his boat turned completely over five times, and he discovered among other things major colonies of Macaroni Penguins, Black-browed Albatrosses, Blue Petrels, Narrow-billed Prions, and Sooty Shearwaters. It is a pity that there is no list of the resulting ornithological publications, which already include *Ibis* 125: 595, *Mar. Pollut. Bull.* 15: 343-344, *Australasian Seabird Group Newsletter* 18: 20-21, 23: 1-15, 24: 5-7, *Notornis* 31: 225-231, 31: 320-324, 32: 325 and *Cormorant* 13: 180-181, 14: 20-30, but they are not yet complete. Meanwhile this book provides a good description of the background and some little-known terrain. He has since been given four international awards and an M.B.E.

W.R.P. Bourne

T.D.Rogers, 1988. *A new list of the birds of Masirah Island, Sultanate of Oman*. Oman Bird Records Committee, P.O. Box 246, Sultanate of Oman. 48 pages, £2 and postage.

This is a handsome booklet listing the birds recorded at a former R.A.F. staging post and site of R.A.F. Ornithological Society expeditions off the south-east coast of Arabia. It is surprising to find no mention of the typed check-lists originally drawn up by M.J.Strickland in 1971 and the present author in 1975, or Mike Strickland's useful list of the seabirds in *Sea Swallow* 22: 16-19 (where it should be noted that the birds reported as Black-naped Terns may have been immatures of other species; the Sooty Terns said to have been found breeding in force on the Daimaniyet islands off east Oman, in a note at the end, may have involved some confusion with Bridled Terns, though a few Sooties were subsequently found there).

W.R.P. Bourne

## TAILPIECE

Ungrateful Guests

By Captain S. D. Mayl, M.N.

During the period 6 to 26 April 1988 RRS *Charles Darwin* was carrying out studies of the Equatorial Current/Air/Sea interaction in an area about 450nm NE Solomon Islands, from the equator to 3°S in Longitude 165°E. The area was remarkable for the absence of bird life, but on 13 April a single young Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* joined the ship. Already aboard was another castaway, a Collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris* which had first been noticed on 6 April soon after leaving Lae, Papua New Guinea; a similar bird had also been seen when passing through the Torres Straits on 28 March. Both birds took up residence, the booby on the foremast, and the kingfisher aft.

The kingfisher disappeared on 15th, but the young booby remained, roosting on the foremast every night until dawn. When it was light enough to see the first flying-fish it would swoop down for its breakfast. "He" became a popular member of the ship's company who nick-named him "Jonathan". He passed the day, either on look-out for more fish, flying round the ship, or preening himself on the mast while digesting his food. He could not be mistaken because of his scruffy brown plumage. On returning from diving into the sea he would stretch out his wings to dry in the sun. On 21st we saw the first of more bird life - groups of dark coloured petrels flying at speed low over the water heading NW, but although we saw more during the next two days we never got close enough to identify them.

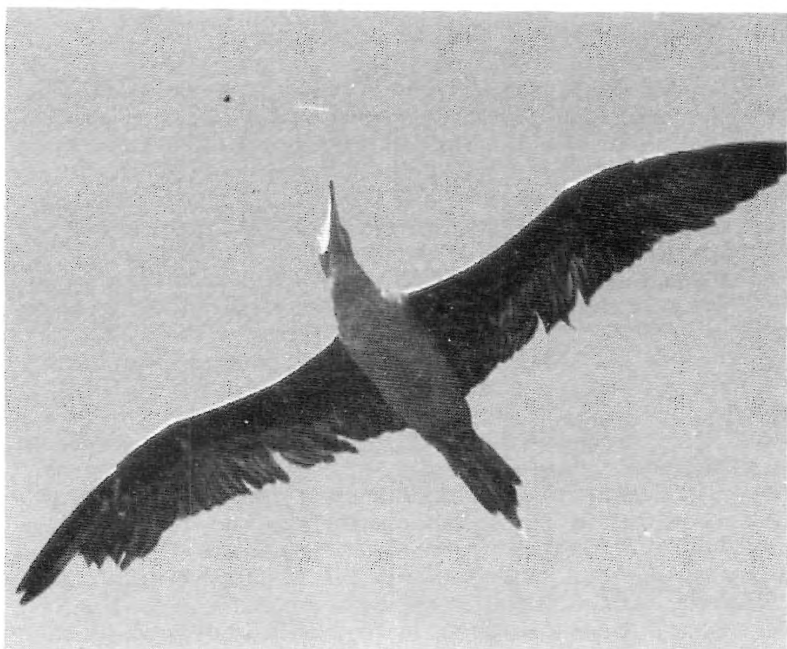
Some Blue-grey Noddies *Proceisterna cerulea* were seen on 23rd. "Jonathan" went off, and his place was taken by a lone adult booby, but when the youngster returned on the 24th Jonathan seemed upset that his territory had been invaded, and that evening he chased the adult away.

All this time on the foremast finally upset the bosun because of the "guano" raining down on the newly painted deck. The Bosun's plan to keep Jonathan off the mast was to cover the rails with grease. Our Jonathan took a dim view of this, shifted his perch to a Met. instrument, and aimed a load at the Bosun scrubbing the foredeck! If only I had had a video camera!

Jonathan finally left us on 26th April, as we headed SE for the Fijian Islands. But strange to say a scruffy young booby was seen roosting on the foremast the evening before we arrived there on 2 May.....

(NOTE. The above note is based on a personal letter from Captain Sam Mayl, received shortly before he was taken ill aboard RRS *Charles Darwin* in the South Atlantic, and flown home to UK where he subsequently died, on 4 April. He alas therefore never saw this piece in its final draft, but it is published as a tribute and memorial to him.

M.B.C.



Juvenile Red-footed Booby - "Jonathan" - see Tailpiece, page 69  
*Photo: Captain S. D. Mayl, MN*

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## INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Interested persons are invited to submit contributions for *Sea Swallow*. Authors do not need to be R.N.B.W.S. members. Material may take the form of papers, notes, progress reports, letters or reviews.

Manuscripts should ideally be typed in double spacing and submitted in duplicate. Figures and diagrams should be prepared in the size of final production.

The style used in *Sea Swallow* should be followed, with the standard abbreviations, nomenclature and use of references as in *British Birds*.

Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition, must reach the Editor by **31st March**.